The Shawl Study Guide

The Shawl by Cynthia Ozick

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Introduction

"The Shawl" was first published in the *New Yorker* in 1980. The story was reprinted in Cynthia Ozick's 1989 collection, *The Shawl,* where it was paired with "Rosa," a story that picks up the tale of the same characters some thirty years later. "The Shawl" is about the Holocaust, the systematic slaughter of some six million Jews, as well as at least that many gypsies, homosexuals, and other "undesirables" by the Nazis during World War II. Although Ozick was born and raised in the United States, she is well versed in Jewish history and tradition, and her story quickly became one of the best-known stories about the Nazi death camps. "The Shawl" is particularly admired for its compactness. In only two thousand words, Ozick manages to evoke the horror of the Holocaust for her readers. The story touches on many themes, including survival, motherhood, nurture, prejudice, and betrayal.

Author Biography

Cynthia Ozick was born on April I?, 1928, in New York City. Her parents, William and Celia (Regelson) Ozick, had come to the United States from northwestern Russia. In addition to his work as a pharmacist, William was a Jewish scholar. Ozick considers herself a feminist and claims she became one at the age of five, when her grandmother took her to heder, a school for the study of Hebrew and the Torah. The rabbi told Ozick's grandmother to take her home, since" a girl doesn't have to study." Ozick returned the next day and quickly established herself as a good student.

She continued her education at Hunter College High School, then at New York University, from which she graduated in 1949 with a B.A. in English. She received an M.A. in English from Ohio State University in 1950.

Throughout the 1950s, Ozick worked as an advertising copywriter for Filene' s Department Store. She also wrote articles and poetry and began work on a novel, which she abandoned several years later. In 1952, she married Bernard Hallote, a lawyer. Her daughter, Rachel, was born in 1965. That year, Ozick had several poems published in *Judaism* magazine.

Ozick's literary career gained momentum in 1966 with the publication of her novel *Trust,* the first of her many works With a Jewish theme. Her next book, *The Pagan Rabbi and Other Stories,* was published in 1971. It won the Jewish Council Book Award and the B'nai B'rith Jewish Heritage Award and was nominated for the National Book Award. Ozick has continued to win many prestigious awards for her fiction. Other works of fiction include *Bloodshed and Three Novellas* (1976), *Levitation' Five Fictions* (1982), *The Cannibal Galaxy* (1983), *The Messiah of Stockholm* (1987), and *The Shawl* (1989). Ozick has also written two nonfiction books: *Art and Ardor,* published in 1987, and *Metaphor and Memory,* published in 1989.

Ozick contributes to the "About Books" column in the *New York Times Book Review,* and writes articles, reviews, stories, poems, and translations from Yiddish for such periodicals as *Commentary,* the *New Republic, Partisan Review,* the *New Leader, Ms., Esquire,* the *New Yorker, American Poetry Review,* and *Harper's.*

Plot Summary

"The Shawl" opens with a description of three people, suffering tremendously, who are walking. The narrator notes that Rosa has a yellow star sewn into her coat, and Magda has blue eyes and yellow hair, like one of "them." Soon it is clear that Rosa and Stella are Jewish women who are being marched to a concentration camp. Magda, an infant, will be killed if she is discovered, so Rosa considers giving Magda to someone by the side of the road. But Rosa fears that she will be shot if she leaves the line, or that the person she tries to pass Magda to might not take her, or might drop her, killing her instantly. She continues to hide the baby inside her shawl.

In the camp, Rosa manages to keep Magda hidden for some time. Rosa knows, however, that Magda will die She fears that someone, perhaps Stella, will kill Magda to eat her, or that she will be discovered somehow. As Rosa protects Magda, Magda protects her shawl. It is "her baby, her pet, her little sister." She hides in it, laughs at it when it blows in the wind, and sucks on it for sustenance.

One day, Stella steals Magda's shawl to put over herself. Searching for the shawl, Magda toddles into the square outside the barracks, screaming "Maaaa-." Rosa cannot run to Magda or they will both be killed. Instead, she runs to get the shawl, hoping to return to the courtyard in time to catch Magda's attention and stop her screaming before she is discovered. But Rosa is too late. She watches as Magda is carried off by a guard who throws her into the electric fence, killing her. Still, Rosa cannot run to Magda. She cannot scream or do anything else that would indicate that Magda was her child. She stuffs the shawl into her own mouth to keep herself from screaming.

Detailed Summary & Analysis

Summary

This story is Rosa's recollection of a death march to a concentration camp and later, life in the camp, with her newborn daughter Magda and 14-year-old niece Stella. Therefore, it begins, not with a journal entry but with a characterization of Stella tainted by events yet to come. "Stella, cold, cold, the coldness of hell."

Rosa cradles her tiny baby at her breast, wrapped in a shawl. No one knows she is there except Rosa and Stella. Magda is hungry and Rosa nurses her. Magda cries and Rosa comforts her blond, blue-eyed daughter, who could pass for the Germans who imprison them. Rosa imagines how she will spare her daughter the fate that awaits them, perhaps by pushing her bundle into the arms of a woman at the edge of a village they pass, but so much could go wrong. Instead, she imagines that Magda is safe so long as she is bundled in the shawl. Magda sucks on the shawl when there is no more milk and Rosa imagines that it is nearly magical in the way it nourishes her for the next three days and nights.

Meanwhile, Stella, described as "a thin girl of fourteen," is a child herself in need of comfort, jealous even of the tiny, weak infant. She longs to be wrapped in the shawl, hidden, sleeping, rocked by the march. She pronounces Rosa "Aryan" and Rosa thinks it sounds as if she says, "Let us devour her." Rosa fantasizes that Stella's hunger is such that she will eat the baby if she dies.

In camp, Rosa keeps Magda alive by giving almost all of her food to her, which causes her milk to dry up again. Stella gives nothing. Rosa is able to hide Magda in the shawl in the barracks, but when Magda begins to walk, Rosa knows she will not live much longer. Something will happen. One morning after Rosa has left for roll call, Stella takes the shawl because she is cold. Magda searches for it, walking out of the barracks.

Rosa sees her and hears her crying for the first time since the march. Rosa runs to find the shawl to conceal her. She tears it off Stella and runs back into the sunlight with dozens of images of death flashing before her eyes: meadows of flowers just outside the compound fed by human wastes, composted with remains, watered by a fatty smoke from the gas chambers. She hears the hum of the electric fence and in it voices telling her what to do next: to distract the guard by waving the shawl like a flag. However, already he is carrying Magda away, then hurling her toward the fence. "She looked like a butterfly touching a silver vine," Rosa recalls. Moreover, although the voices in the fence urged her to run, to pick up her daughter, she knew she would be killed if she obeyed. Rosa stuffs Magda's shawl in her mouth to stifle the scream.

Analysis

In an introduction to the 1981 O. Henry Prize Stories Collection, William Abrahams wrote of this first prize-winning story that it seemed as if the author had been inspired, had "received the story and returned it to us in a single breath…" It is a very short story, less than ten pages, and it hurtles toward its inevitable and horrific end in such a way that it seems to be read in a single breath as well.

The shawl is full of symbolism and foreshadowing. The shawl, itself, serves as a symbol of hope in the otherwise hopeless situation that Rosa, Magda and Stella find themselves. It hides Magda from the Nazis who assume it simply covers Rosa's breasts. It somehow nourishes the baby with its "milk of linen" after Rosa's milk dries up on the march, and serves as a pacifier and a plaything in the barracks while Rosa is away. When Stella takes it, causing the baby to be discovered and killed, she later explains simply that she was cold. The shawl, a source of warmth, did not keep her warm that morning, and Rosa contends she was always cold thereafter.

It is interesting that Rosa characterizes Stella as possessing "the coldness of hell," when hell is depicted as a fiery place full of brimstone. It is likely that Rosa is dismissing her coldness as insignificant when compared to the coldness it took to strip a baby of its "blanket," of the coldness of a murderer, of the coldness of the dead baby.

Magda's death is foreshadowed from the opening lines, which hint that Stella has done something unforgivable, then describe her lack of regard or help with the baby, her jealousy, her potential cannibalism. Rosa also describes her daughter's first tooth as an "elfin tombstone."

After Stella takes Magda's shawl and causes the baby to be seen while searching for it, Rosa strips Stella of the shawl and rushes out to try to protect her daughter with it once again. As she runs, she sees death in the flowers in the meadow, in the ash that falls from the sky, and then she hears warning voices in the hum of the electric fences. Rosa thinks she can hear "grainy sad voices" in the noise, then as the madness of the entire situation begins to consume her, she hear the voices pick up in intensity, telling her what to do, telling her to lift, shake, whip and unfurl the shawl. However, Magda is being carried away, not toward the shawl. Moreover, when Magda's tiny body hits the fence, Rosa says, "the steel voices went mad in their growling," telling her to run, to pick up Magda. However, Rosa realizes that it would be madness to obey, that the guards would kill her too. Instead, she gags herself with the shawl to stifle her screams.

Characters

Magda

Rosa's daughter, Magda, is a nursing infant hidden in her mother's shawl at the beginning of the story, and a fifteen-month-old child when she is killed. Magda is the center of Rosa's existence: Rosa gives Magda most of her own food and focuses much of her energy on worrying about what might happen to Magda and on keeping the child alive. Magda learns as an infant not to cry when she is hungry; instead, she satisfies her hunger by sucking on the shawl. The shawl becomes the center of her existence, her" own baby, her pet, her little sister." She hides under it to keep from being discovered by the Nazis, sucks on it to satisfy her hunger, laughs at it as it blows in the wind. Magda does not cry until Stella takes her shawl away. Her cries then, as she walks out of the barracks during roll call, cause her to be discovered and killed.

Rosa

Rosa is a Jewish woman who, along with her daughter and niece, is imprisoned in a concentration camp. Rosa's one focus in "The Shawl" is how to keep her infant daughter Magda alive for as long as possible, even though she knows the child is doomed to die. As she is marched to the camp, Rosa thinks of passing Magda to a bystander in an attempt to save her, but she fears the person might intentionally or unintentionally drop the baby. She fears that her niece, Stella, is waiting for Magda to die so that she can eat her. Later, Rosa fears that someone in the camp will kill Magda for the same reason. She also fears the Nazi guards, who will kill Magda the moment she is discovered. Rosa knows that Magda will die, but she draws on every resource of her body, mind, and soul [0 delay that moment.

Stella

Stella is Rosa's fourteen-year-old niece. She is described as a girl who is "too small, with thin breasts," whose knees are "tumors on sticks, her elbows chicken bones." Such a description hints at the near-starvation conditions under which prisoners Jived in the camp. Stella is always cold, always hungry, and jealous of Rosa's baby, who at least has the comfort of her mother and her shawl. Stella also accuses Magda of being an Aryan because the child has blond hair and blue eyes, two features of the Nazi's idealized race. Rosa fears that Stella is waiting for Magda to die so she can eat the child-not an unreasonable fear given the circumstances. Stella's most important action is to cause Magda's death by taking the child's shawl for herself. .. I was cold," is all she says later, in explanation.

Themes

Survival

Underlying Ozick's story is the theme of survival. Rosa struggles with this constantly. During the march to the concentration camp, Rosa struggles over whether or not she should pass Magda to an onlooker, possibly ensuring her child's survival. Rosa decides against this, however, realizing that she would risk her own life in doing so and could not guarantee Magda's safety. Rosa chooses survival in the moment for both of them, rather than probable death for herself and uncertainty for her child. As Rosa struggles over what to do about Magda, Stella longs to be Magda: a baby rocked and sleeping in her mother's arms. Rosa also thinks that the starving Stella gazes at Magda as if she wishes to eat the child. Magda, though far too young to have any knowledge of what is happening to and around her, gives up screaming and quietly sucks on the shawl.

Life in the camp is a constant battle for survival. Rosa, apparently caring more about Magda's survival than her own, gives most of her food to her child. Stella, caring mostly about her own survival, gives no food to Magda. Magda herself turns to the shawl for comfort; it is her "baby, her pet, her little sister"; when she needs to be still-and stillness is necessary to her survival-she sucks on a corner of it.

Halfway through the story, Stella takes Magda's shawl because she is cold. It is, perhaps, the only one of her afflictions that she can do anything about.

There is no food to ease her hunger, and there is nothing she can do to escape from the camp; but Magda's shawl might ease her cold. This, too, is a form of reaching for survival. Stella has chosen to bring what small comfort she can to herself, ignoring the potential cost to Magda and Rosa.

Magda, knowing no better, leaves the barracks in her search for the shawl. Again, Rosa has to make a choice about her survival. If she runs to Magda, they will both be killed. If she does nothing, Magda will be killed. The only solution she can think of, however slim, is to get the shawl to Magda before she is discovered by the camp's guards. She runs for the shawl and returns to the square with it, but she is too late. A soldier carries Magda away toward the electric fence at the other side of the camp. Rosa watches her baby fly through the air, hit the fence and die, then fall to the ground. Again, there are choices. If she goes to Magda, she will be shot; if she screams, she will be shot. Rosa chooses survival, using the shawl to mute her scream.

Motherhood and Nurturing

Closely linked to the theme of survival are *issues* of motherhood and nurturing. Throughout "The Shawl," Stella longs to be nurtured. On the march, she longs to be a baby, comforted by her mother's arms. In the camp, she longs for food, sometimes causing Rosa to think that she is "waiting for Magda to die so she could put her teeth

into the little thighs." She takes the only bit of nurturing she can find: warmth from Magda's shawl.

The *issues* of motherhood are more complex. Because she *is* a mother, Rosa cannot think only of herself, as Stella does. Each decision must be weighed. What *is* the possible benefit to her? To Magda? What are the possible costs? With each decision, Rosa must decide whether it is in her best interest to sacrifice herself, her baby, or both of them.

Prejudice and Tolerance

Issues of prejudice and tolerance are also raised in "The Shawl." Rosa, Stella, Magda, and the others are imprisoned or killed in concentration camps simply because they are Jewish. Prejudice exists on their part too-at least on the part of Stella. Looking at Magda's yellow hair and blue eyes, she says" Aryan," in a voice that makes Rosa think she has said, "Let us devour her."

The *issue* of tolerance is raised in the camp itself. Rosa and Magda are not alone in the barracks they occupy. The other occupants are aware of Magda's existence and of Rosa's deception. In the camp, "a place without *pity,"* they cannot know what might happen to them if Magda is discovered in the barracks. Yet no one reports her presence.

Betrayal

Rosa constantly fears that Stella--or someone else-will kill Magda to eat her. While this does not happen, it is Stella's betrayal that costs Magda her life and Rosa her child. "The Shawl" points to one reason for this kind of betrayal: the inhuman treatment Stella has received has made her pitiless. "The cold went into her heart," the narrator says. "Rosa saw that Stella's heart was cold."

Style

Point of View

"The Shawl" *is* written in an omniscient third person point of view. It is omniscient because the narrator can see things through the eyes of all the characters. For instance, the narrator tells readers that "Stella wanted to be wrapped in a shawl," and that "Rosa did not feel hunger" -things which could only be known by that character. The point of view is said to be thIrd person because the narrator speaks about the characters from the outside, referring to them as "she" or "he."

Dialogue

"The Shawl" is notable for contaimng almost no dialogue. Rosa says nothing. Stella speaks twice: once when she calls Magda an "Aryan," and again when she says "I was cold" to explain why she took Magda's shawl. Magda screams in the early part of the story, but soon gives that up. She makes no other sound until her shawl is taken from her; Rosa even thinks Magda is a mute. When Stella steals the shawl, however, Magda says what will be the only word she ever speaks: "Maaaa-." The characters' silence may represent the silence they had to maintain during the march and in the camp in order to protect their lives. Had any of them uttered one word or complaint that could have been overheard by a camp official, they would have been killed, as Magda was. Despite their lack of communication through speech, the plot is intense due to their tragic situation.

Style

Ozick uses an extremely spare style In "The Shawl" The story is only two thousand words long. An important characteristic of this style is how much information Ozick trusts the reader to fill in for him or herself. Ozick does not waste words by stating that Rosa and Stella are being marched to a concentration camp. She simply describes a march. In the process, she mentions the yellow "star sewn into Rosa's coat" and the fact that Magda's blue eyes and blonde hair could cause you to think "she was one of *their* babies." At this point, it becomes evident that Ozick is describing the plight of Jews during the Holocaust, and readers are trusted to bring what knowledge they have of that event to their reading of the story. Ozick does not describe the camp itself until some description of it becomes necessary to the story, and then she describes only what the reader absolutely needs to know. She mentions the square into which Magda has wandered. The one part of the camp that Ozick describes in detail is the electric fence surrounding it, the fence against which Magda will be thrown

Structure

In the course of the story, Ozick shifts from a narrative mode that consists primarily of exposition to one In which the reader accompanies the character through the action-step by step, thought by thought-in an extended scene Exposition is when the writer does not take the reader through the action step by step, but allows the narrator to present an overview of what has occurred or is occurring. Approximately the first two-thirds of "The Shawl" is exposition. In a little over a thousand words the narrator succinctly reports the events of several months. The narrator recounts the march and what life was like in the camp. Readers are occasionally told what a character thinks or feels, but these sketchy details do not comprise full-fledged scenes.

With Magda's first word, "Maaaa-," Ozick switches from an exposition to a detailed scene. The narrator moves into the mind of Rosa and remains there until the end of the story. In the first two-thirds of the story, enough time passes for Magda to have grown from a nursing infant to a fifteen-month-old child, old enough to walk. The final third of the story covers only a few moments. Readers see what Rosa sees and hear her thoughts. The narrator recounts Rosa's trek into the barracks to find the shawl and back out to discover she is too late. Readers witness Magda's death through Rosa's eyes.

This switch from exposition to a detailed scene has a powerful effect on the story. During the time when Magda's nearly inevitable death is somewhere in the future, the reader is more distant from the characters. As Magda's death approaches, readers move closer to Rosa's perspective. When Magda is killed, readers witness the scene from the position of a mother watching as her daughter is murdered.

Repetition

Ozick uses repetition to build suspense. Readers know from the beginning of the story that Magda is constantly on the edge of death. Rosa's breasts are dry, so there is nothing for Magda to eat; she could die of starvation at any moment. Or she could be discovered by the soldiers and killed. Rosa also knows that Magda is "going to die very soon." But time moves forward and Magda does not die. Then she begins to walk and the time of her death seems to move closer: "When Magda began to walk, Rosa knew that Magda was going to die very soon." Again, time passes and Magda does not die. Then Stella steals the shawl and Magda walks out into the square. Her death moves even closer: "Rosa saw that today Magda was going to die." Finally, Magda screams and the time of her death is present: Rosa "saw that Magda was going to die." The repetition causes an echo in the reader's mind: Magda is going to die, Magda is going to die. The outcome of the story is never in dispute, the action merely concerns how Magda's death is played out. Along with Rosa, readers see Magda's death growing nearer. And, along with Rosa, they can do nothing to change what will happen.

Symbolism

The most obvious symbol of the story is Magda's seemingly magical shawl. Critic Alan R. Berger, writing in *Crisis and Covenant: The Holocaust in American Jewish Fiction* (1985), claims that the shawl is a literary symbol of the tallit, or Jewish prayer shawl. To wrap oneself in the tallit, he says, is to be surrounded "by the holiness and protection of the commandments." Berger believes that one message of "The Shawl" is that "Jewish religious creativity and covenantal symbolism can occur even under the most extreme conditions." According to Andrew Gordon in "Cynthia Ozick's 'The Shawl' and the Transitional Object" *(Literature and Psychology,* 1994), Ozick denies having had this in mind when she wrote the story. Critic Suzanne Kingenstein, writing in the Fall, 1992, Issue of *Studies in American Jewish Literature,* says that "the shawl functions in place of speech for both infant and mother and also as a kind of umbilical cord between the two characters. Again, states Gordon, Ozick has denied that this was her intention.

Gordon also believes that the shawl is a "transitional object," an object that helps an Infant make the transition from the state of being one with its mother to the recognition that It is an individual, separate from its mother. He states that Rosa, Stella, and Magda, "in their need to possess the shawl can be considered as infants suffering extreme oral deprivation and in need of a mother." Gordon reads "The Shawl" as "a story about delusion as a defense against an overwhelming reality, against loss of control, and against traumatic loss."

Ozick herself claims that she had none of these "pop psychology" ideas in mind when writing "The Shawl."

Historical Context

One of the major historical events of Ozick's lifetime was the Great Depression-the period of economic crisis and unemployment that began in the United States in October, 1929, and continued through most of the 1930s. Although she was born in 1928, one year before the start of the Depression, Ozick claims not to have been affected by it. She describes "the family pharmacy as giving a sense of comfort and prosperity," according to Joseph Lowin in *Cynthia Ozick.*

A series of events that seem to have had a far greater effect on Ozick's work occurred in Europe. In 1933, Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of the German Reich. Several months later, he proclaimed a one-day boycott of all Jewish shops, followed quickly by the forced retirement of all non-Aryan civil servants, except soldiers. Hitler's persecution of the Jews had begun. He instituted the use of the term "Aryan" to designate members of what they believed to be a "master race" of non-Jewish white people, particularly those with Nordic features. Soon, kosher butchering was outlawed, as was the selling of Jewish newspapers in the street. In 1936, Jews lost the right to participate in German elections. In 1938, Jewish passports were marked with a "J," all Jewish businesses were closed down, Jewish students were removed from German schools, and Jews were no longer allowed to attend plays, movies, concerts, or exhibitions By 1939, Jews had to hand in their driver's licenses and car registrations, leave the universities, sell their businesses and real estate, and hand over securities and jewelry. By the middle of 1939, more than half of Germany's Jews had left for other countries. Many came to the United States.

By the end of 1939, Jews were beginning to be forced to wear yellow stars of David. Two years later, in 1941, the large-scale deportation of Jews to concentration camps began Three years after that, only 15,000 Jews remained in Germany--down from over 500,000 eleven years earlier.

Ozick was five years old when Hitler became Chancellor; she was thirteen the year that extermination of Jews in concentration camps began in earnest. She was seventeen in 1945, the year the concentration camps were liberated and World War II ended. She grew up in a Jewish culture: her parents came from northwest Russia and from the Lithuanian Jewish tradition of that region. Her father, aside from being a pharmacist, was a Jewish scholar in Yiddish Hebrew. Ozick herself entered Jewish religious instruction at the age of five. Yet her entire youth was spent in a world where Jews were persecuted, then murdered, in Nazi-dominated countries, and refused sanctuary in most other countries, including her own United States.

Alongside the European events were Ozick's own difficulties with being a Jew in America. She calls the area of the Bronx where she was raised a place where it was "brutally difficult to be a Jew," and describes being called names and having stones thrown at her because she was Jewish. Ozick talks about the influence of history on her first published novel, *Trust.* She describes it has having been transformed from an American novel into a Jewish novel. "It's history as narration," she says, quoted in

Lowin's *Cynthia Ozick,* "history as pageant almost" Jewish characters and the history of the Jewish people are at the center of much of Ozick's fiction.

Critical Overview

Both the story "The Shawl" and the later collection by the same name were very well received by critics. In a September 10, 1989, article in *The New York Times Book Review,* Francine Prose finds that Ozick "pulls off the rare trick of making art out of what we would rather not see." Barbara Hoffert, reviewing the story for the August, 1989, *Library Journal,* praises the work as "a subtle yet morally uncompromising tale that many will regard as a small gem." Reviewer Irving Halperin, writing of the collection in the December 15, 1989, issue of *Commonweal,* states that "In a time when the memory of the Holocaust is being trivialized by slick fiction, talk shows, and TV 'documentaries,' . . . Ozick's extraordinary volume is a particularly welcome achievement of the moral imagination."

In "The Shawl," Ozick continues to develop the body of work based on Jewish characters and themes that she has concentrated on for most of her writing career. According to Elaine M. Kauvar in *Cynthia Ozick's Fiction: Tradition and Invention* (1993), however, "The Shawl" represents the first time Ozick tells a tale "directly from the consciousness of a Holocaust survivor." Rosa, Stella, and Magda are fictional characters, but Ozick places them in a story filled With "facts gleaned from history and events derived from memoirs," Kauvar states. Ozick takes the reader into the minds of fictional characters, but these fictional characters walk in shoes we can easily imagine to have been inhabited by Jews living in Europe during Nazi rule. The effect is different from that of reading" about" the Holocaust; It is closer to the effect of walking through it. Kauvar believes that this is one element of "The Shawl" which makes it "undeniably of great importance" to Holocaust literature. Kauvar claims that this basis of history and memoir allows Ozick to penetrate "the individual psyche by apprehending the historical occurrences that shaped it."

In another time and place, Rosa, Stella, and Magda might have made different decisions and acted differently than they do in "The Shawl." But they do not live in another time and place. This allows Ozick to demonstrate the extent to which human beings are affected by, even formed by, the time and place in which they live.

Kauvar also discusses the ways in which Ozick merges biography and fiction. Many Holocaust survivors have written biographical accounts of their experiences. Readers approach these accounts with the knowledge that, whatever these people have been through, the events occurred in an increasingly distant past, and the author whose work we are reading survived. While some may empathize with and attempt to understand the writer, the barrier of time makes it difficult for others to walk in the Holocaust survivor's shoes. Biography presents events. It might describe, it might analyze, but it rarely evokes. To evoke is to do what almost anyone who has taken any writing class has been told: to show rather than tell. Ozick does not talk about Rosa; she puts readers in Rosa's shoes. She does the same, though to a somewhat lesser extent, with Stella and Magda. The barrier of time disappears. Readers walk as the victims-both survivors and those who did not survive-walked: step-by-step, facing one decision at a time, never knowing what is to come.

"The Shawl" is often discussed in tandem with "Rosa," its sister story, which picks up on the stories of Rosa and Stella some thirty years later. "Rosa" is, again, evocative, dropping readers into the life of Rosa Lublin in the United States. The two stories share more than characters. They share themes and imagery: as Rosa's life in the camp was hell, her life thirty years later is a different form of hell, and the shawl that sheltered Magda appears again in the latter story. As one might expect, critics have examined the role of the shawl in these stories from the vIewpOints of many schools of criticism Though it plays a lesser role in "Rosa," the shawl as a symbol is, perhaps, the most-discussed aspect of "The Shawl"

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3
- Critical Essay #4

Critical Essay #1

Griffin has published several short stories and essays and has taught at Trinity College and at the University of Michigan. In the following essay, she discusses the significance of the shawl in Ozick's story.

There are many ways to approach a work of fiction, to decide what that work has to offer you. You can look at the plot: the events that happen and the order in which they occur. You can examine the characters who people the story: what can you learn from who they are and what they do? You can study the story's language, or the images-both obvious and suggested-that the writer uses.

In Cynthia Ozick's "The Shawl," the images and language the author uses bring certain ideas to mind. This discussion will lead us to one of the things "The Shawl" imparts: a suggestion about how strong the human will to survive is and the lengths to which human beings will go to ensure their survival. The first and most obvious thing to consider upon finishing "The Shawl" is the shawl itself. It is clearly important, since the story is named after it. The shawl is also one of the most widely discussed parts of the story. It seems as if each critic who considers this story has his or her own interpretation of the shawl.

In his article "Holocaust Responses I: Judaism as a Religious Value System," Alan L. Berger claims that the shawl "is a literary symbol of the tallit," or Jewish prayer shawl. To wrap oneself in the tallit, he says, is to be surrounded "by the holiness and protection of the commandments." Berger believes that one message of "The Shawl" is that "Jewish religious creativity and covenantal symbolism can occur even under the most extreme conditions." In his interpretation, the shawl protects first Magda and later Rosa from the horrors that surround them in the same way that the Jewish religion protects the souls of Jews from the horrors of the world.

In an article in *Studies in American Jewish Literature,* Suzanne Klingenstein says "the shawl functions in place of speech for both infant and mother and also as a kind of umbilical cord between the two characters." Klingenstein stresses the mother/ daughter relationship in "The Shawl" and believes that this relationship is the heart of the story. The shawl is important because it represents the constant link between mother and daughter.

Andrew Gordon believes the shawl is a "transitional object," an object that helps an infant make the transition from the state of being one with its mother to the recognition that it is an individual, separate from its mother. He states that Rosa, Stella, and Magda, "in their need to possess the shawl can be considered as infants suffering extreme oral deprivation and in need of a mother." Gordon reads "The Shawl" as "a story about delusion as a defense against an overwhelming reality, against loss of control, and against traumatic loss." In Gordon's interpretation, the shawl represents that delusion: it is an "illusion" which "allows for magical thinking as a defense against anxiety in

traumatic circumstances." Rosa can believe that the shawl can nourish and hide her baby.

While each of these interpretations has merit, it is possible to view the role of the shawl in the story in a less complicated way and have those views regarded as completely valid. To do this, simply examine what happens in the story and how the shawl relates to those events.

Death is omnipresent in "The Shawl" Death is introduced in the opening paragraph, when the narrator explains that Rosa's breasts do not have enough milk to feed the baby Magda-who sometimes screams because there is nothing for her to suck except air-that Stella is also ravenous, and that Stella has knees that are "tumors on sticks" and elbows that are "chicken bones." Later, twice in quick succession it is stated that Rosa thinks Stella is waiting for Magda to die. Readers are repeatedly told that Magda is going to die, and her death moves closer as the story progresses. First, Rosa knows Magda is going to die very soon, then today, then now Finally, in one long scene that takes up nearly half the story, we watch as Magda dies, death fills "The Shawl."

The role of the shawl when we examine its relationship to death is to thwart death. It saves Magda from starvation. Throughout the story, as long as Magda remains hidden under the shawl, she remains alive. It is only when the shawl is taken from her that Magda dies. When Magda is murdered, Rosa stuffs the shawl into her own mouth, stifling a scream. If Rosa had screamed, the guards would have killed her, too.

Another prominent idea in "The Shawl" is the idea of hell. Hell is brought up in the first sentence, where we are told that Stella feels "cold, cold, the coldness of hell." We do not usually think of hell as being cold. It takes some thought, and perhaps some research, to realize that Ozick might be referring to Dante's *Inferno,* where the coldness at the center of hell is reserved for those who commit the worst of sins: betrayal.

At the opening of the story, Stella's coldness seems external. Her body is cold. As the story progresses, Stella's coldness is one of the things that causes her to steal Magda's shawl. We are told that after the theft and Magda's death, Stella is "always cold, always. The cold went into her heart: Rosa saw that Stella's heart was cold." The repetition of the words "cold" and "always" helps to ensure that the reader notices the coldness. That repetition occurs immediately following the only place in the story where we actually hear Stella's words, as she explains that she stole Magda's shawl because "I was cold." This single short patch of dialogue also serves to draw the reader's attention to the coldness.

Because the coldness is so closely associated With Stella, it might be easy to conclude that the hell only relates to her. But we are also told that the concentration camp they are in is "a place without pity" and that "all pity was annihilated" -a word associated with death-"in Rosa." The hell is all around them and inside them. The closing scene, where we watch step by step as the baby Magda is electrocuted, is surely an image of hell.

The role of the shawl when we examine its relationship to hell is to comfort, and perhaps to make this hell a little less wretched. At the story's beginning, Magda is comforted by being in her mother's arms, "wrapped in a shawl. . . rocked by the march." Rosa is also somewhat comforted, since her baby is safe for the moment. The shawl also represents comfort to Stella, though It is not comforting to her at this moment. She envies Magda for being wrapped in the shawl and rocked in her mother's arms. She wishes the comfort represented by the shawl could be hers.

The shawl's ability to hide Magda at this point saves her life. The shawl saves her life in another way too-It is a magic shawl which can "nourish an infant for three days and three nights." Its ability to stave off starvation is another source of comfort for Magda and Rosa. As Magda becomes older, the shawl comforts the girl in another way. It becomes her "baby, her pet, her little sister." It even causes her to laugh "when the wind blew its comers." Stella still envies Magda's shawl, which she is now not even allowed to touch.

Stella's desperate need for some bit of comforting, however small, is one of the reasons she finally takes Magda's shawl for herself. She covers herself with it-perhaps gaining some tiny measure of warmth along with the security of being covered by the magic shawl-and falls asleep. Magda, having lost her comforter, wanders into the barracks square screaming. She is discovered by the Nazi guards and immediately killed. As this occurs, Rosa runs to the barracks and retrieves the shawl. The thought that she might be able to use it to somehow save Magda comforts her momentarily. But she cannot save Magda. Now the shawl's role of saving people returns: Rosa fills her mouth with the shawl, stifling her scream. If she had screamed, she too would have been killed.

The shawl is not a great or impressive item. Yet, at least in the minds of the characters in this story, the shawl is able to save and to comfort. Perhaps the shawl can be seen as an object used to show us how strong the human will to survive is. It is a small thing, but it is the only thing available to these people in this situation. They turn to it, reaching for whatever chance for survival it might offer.

Source: Tery Griffin, "Overview of 'The Shaw!'," in *Short Stories for Students,* Gale, 1998 .

Critical Essay #2

In the following excerpt, Gordon analyzes the function of the shawl in Ozick's story in terms of concepts drawn from psychoanalysis.

Cynthia Ozick's "The Shawl" (1980) is a Holocaust story about a mother struggling heroically but in vain to save her baby in a death camp. Brief and poetically compressed-two thousand words, Just two pages in its original publication in *The New Yorker-it* has a shattering impact. Ozick manages to avoid the common pitfalls of Holocaust fiction: on the one hand, she does not sentimentalize, but on the other, she does not numb the reader with a succession of horrifying events. She works largely through metaphor, "indirection and concentration" [according to Joseph Lowin, *Cynthia Ozick,* 1988]. For example, the words "Jew," "Nazi," "concentration camp," or even "war" are never mentioned; these would arouse the kind of Immediate, unearned responses Ozick eschews. We do not know what year it is or what country. As the story opens, we only know that three female characters -Rosa, her fifteen-month-old baby Magda, and a fourteen-year-old girl named Stella (only in a sequel story, "Rosa" [1983], do we learn that Stella is Rosa's niece)-are being marched, exhausted and starving, toward an unknown destination. Two details the word" Aryan" and the mention of yellow stars sewn into their coats -allow us to fill in the rest. The historical and political context disappears, and the focus narrows to the feelings of three characters as they struggle to survive moment by moment in extreme circumstances: "They were in a place without pity." Rosa, the central character, could be any mother who wants to keep her baby alive against impossible odds. This is a story about the oppression of women: there is no mention of Magda' s father, and the only male referred to is the guard who murders Magda, a faceless monster described in terms of a helmet, "a black body like a domino and a pair of black boots."

I want to consider the central symbol of the story, the shawl in which Magda is wrapped, which 1 believe functions in a way similar to what D. W. Winnicott would call a "transitional object" *[Playing and Reality,* 1971]. But the shawl serves not only as a transitional object for the infant in the story but also as the focus of the conflict, and while it passes from hand to hand among the three characters, it becomes a totem or fetish for the teenage Stella and the mother Rosa as well. The shawl suggests the necessity for illusion, for magical thinking as a defense against anxiety in traumatic circumstances, but also the ways in which healthy illusion can easily shift into unhealthy delusion. As Winnicott writes, "1 am therefore studying the substance of *illusion,* that which is allowed to the infant, and which in adult life is inherent in art and religion, and yet becomes a hallmark of madness." Rosa, Stella, and Magda form a group on the basis of their shared illusion concerning [what is described in the story as] the "magic shawl." (Although the infant's use of the shawl is understandable, Rosa and Stella's belief in it is a sign of desperation, of regression and the breakdown of rationality in the face of extreme deprivation and loss. Transitional phenomena, Winnicott explains, eventually become diffused and spread "over the whole cultural field," including such generally healthy activities as play, art, and religion, but also such neurotic manifestations as "fetishism" and "the talisman of obsessional rituals." The shawl in

Ozick's story, I believe, functions as a transitional object which later changes into an infantile fetish for the baby, and for the teenager and the mother it definitely becomes a fetish or magical talisman.

The transitional object, Winnicott explains, is the Infant's "first 'not-me' possession," (1) something which is both found and created, both inner and outer, and stands in for the breast. The object, which may be a bit of cloth or a security blanket, comes at an intermediate stage of development between thumb-sucking and attachment to a toy or doll. It exists in an intermediate area "between the subjective and that which is objectively perceived."

"The object represents the infant's transition from a state of being merged with the mother to a state of being in relation with the mother as something outside and separate."

If the transitional object is a form of defense against the loss of the breast and separation from the mother [Elizabeth Wright, *Psychoanalytic Criticum: Theory in Practice,* 1984], then all three characters in "The Shawl"-the baby, the teenager, and the mother-in their need to possess the shawl can be considered as infants suffering extreme oral deprivation and in need of a mother. Here is the opening paragraph:

Stella, cold, cold, the coldness of hell How they walked on the roads together, Rosa With Magda curled np between sore breasts Magda wound up in the shawl Sometimes Stella carried Magda But she was jealous of Magda A thin girl of fourteen, too small, with thin breasts of her own. Stella wanted to be wrapped in a shawl, hidden away, asleep, rocked by the march, a baby, a round infant in arms. Magda took Rosa's nipple, and Rosa never stopped walking, a walking cradle. There was not enough milk; sometimes Magda sucked !Ur, then she screamed Stella was ravenous. Her knees were tumors on sticks, her elbows chicken bones.

The keynotes of oral deprivation, inadequate mothering, and the desire to revert to infancy are established in this opening: Rosa is defined as a mother with sore breasts who can no longer adequately feed her infant. Magda is suffering from forced weaning. Stella too is starving-she has been turned into a thing resembling sticks or the skeleton of a chicken. Stella, a teenager, "in a stage between childhood and adulthood" [according to Margot Martin, in *RE' Artes Liberales,* Spring-Fall, 1989], longs to revert to infancy, symbolized by her desire to be wrapped in and mothered by the shawl that protects Magda.

By the second paragraph, Rosa's milk has entirely dried up and Magda has relinquished the breast and turned to the shawl as a surrogate breast: "The duct crevice extinct, a dead volcano, blind eye, chill hole, so Magda took the corner of the shawl and milked it instead." At the same time, Stella moves from desiring the shawl to seeming to want to devour Magda: "Stella gazed at Magda like a young cannibal. . . . it sounded to Rosa as If Stella had said 'Let us devour her'. . . . She was sure that

Stella was Waiting for Magda to die so she could put her teeth into the little thighs."

While the ravenous Stella regresses to a stage of oral sadism, the starving Rosa also seems to regress to infancy: "she learned from Magda how to dank the taste of a finger in one's mouth." The shawl becomes Magda's means of survival: "It was a magic shawl, It could nourish an infant for three days and three nights." Magda grows silent and guarded. she stops crying and never seems to sleep. Her silence and the shawl keep her alive' "Rosa knew Magda was going to me very soon; she should have been dead already, but she had been buried away deep inside the magic shawl, mistaken there for the shivering mound of Rosa's breast" But Rosa fears that Magda has become a deaf-mute from the experience.

For Magda, this shawl has become everything: mother, food, clothing, and shelter.

She watched like a tiger. She guarded her shawl. No one could touch it, only Rosa could touch it. Stella was not allowed The shawl was Magda's own baby, her pet, her little sister She tangled herself up in It and sucked on one of the comers when she wanted to be very still

At this point, it is appropriate to ask whether this shawl is truly a transitional object for Magda or instead an infantile fetish. According to Phyllis Greenacre, the transitional object is an aid to growth that results from healthy development when the child has a good-enough mother. But the infantile fetish results from a disturbance in development, when the mothering is not good enough or "the infant has suffered unusually severe deprivation" *[International Journal of Psychoanalysis,* 1970]. The fetish "grows out of early inadequate object relations and, through its crystallization, tends to constrict their further development." It has some similarities to "the fetish in adult perversion." Considering the trauma that Magda has suffered-a terrorized mother, exposure to a hostile, constantly life-threatening environment, premature weaning and starvation-and the hysterical mutism that she develops, her attachment to the shawl seems to partake more of the neurotic fetish than of the healthy transitional object.

Greenacre mentions that fetishistic phenomena usually appear after weaning at the end of the first year, which corresponds to Magda's case. The fetish begins" at about the tune that the transitional object may be adopted by infants most of whom seem less disturbed. The fetish here seems to represent the feeding function even more strongly than is true of the transitional object," which also holds in Magda's case: because she is starving, she has practically nothing to feed on but the shawl. Greenacre mentions an instance of infantile fetishism which strongly resembles Magda's behavior, in which a blanket was "of great magical effectiveness in quieting severe disturbances of infantile separation anxiety and even of physical pain." When head lice and body lice bite Magda and "crazed her so that she became as wild as one of the big rats that plundered the barracks. . . , she rubbed and scratched and kicked and bit and rolled without a whimper." Her silence is abnormal behavior for an infant, just as her relationship to the shawl seems far more intense than the healthy connection of a baby to a transitional object.

But one Sunny afternoon, Stella appropriates the shawl for herself and goes to sleep beneath It in the barracks. She wants some of the mothering power associated with the

shawl. "Thus, by losing her magical shawl, Magda loses the magical charm that apparently protects her from death for so long."

Rosa is outside and sees Magda toddling into the sunlight, howling for the lost shawl, screaming "Maaaa." It is the first sound she has made since Rosa's milk dried up, and the only word she speaks in the story. It seems a cry for both shawl and mother, which for her have become synonymous "Magda was going to die, and at the same time a fearful joy ran in Rosa's two palms": the joy comes from realizing that her baby can speak, the fear from the ironic fact that the noise has doomed Magda. Only her continued silence would have saved her.

Rosa finds the shawl and tears it away from Stella: the object of struggle has now passed among all three characters. Then, under the influence of "voices" she Imagines she hears in the electrified fence (one can take this as another sign of her derangement, although a critic reads these voices as symbolic of the Jewish dead [Lowin 109]), Rosa runs outside again and waves the shawl like a flag to attract Magda's attention. The shawl is now a banner representing life and faith and hope. But it is too late: a guard has already seized the baby, carries her off, and abruptly tosses her to her death against the fence.

The few minutes leading up to Magda's destruction take up over half the narrative. The murder is described in slow motion and beautiful metaphors to intensify both the suspense and the horror. Magda's arms reach out to the shawl and to her mother, but she recedes into the distance, becoming a "speck" and "no bigger than a moth." When she is hurled at the fence, she turns into a floating angel: "All at once Magda was swimming through the air. The whole of Magda traveled through loftiness. She looked like a butterfly touching a silver vine."

Through metaphor, the moment of death becomes a moment of magical transfiguration. As she watches her baby murdered, there is nothing further Rosa can do without endangering her own life. The voices of the fence urge her to run to Magda. But "Rosa's instinct for self-preservation overcomes both her maternal instincts and any heroic urges she may have had" (Lowin 109). The final sentence of the story (which, for the sake of emphasis, is also its longest sentence) shows the shawl now becoming a transitional object for Rosa:

She only stood, because if she ran they would shoot, and If she tried to pick up the sticks of Magda's body they would shoot, and If she let the wolf's screech ascending now through the ladder of her skeleton break out, they would shoot, so she took Magda's shawl and filled her own mouth with it, stuffed it in and stuffed it in, until she was swallowing up the wolf s screech and tasting the Cinnamon and almond depth of Magda's saliva; and Rosa drank Magda's shawl until it dried.

By stifling her screams, the shawl becomes a means of survival for Rosa, as it had been for Magda. And the shawl nurtures her, filling her mouth, just as it had done for Magda. Finally, as the shawl had become a surrogate mother for Magda, so it becomes a surrogate baby for Rosa. "Magda's cinnamon and almond breath has permeated her

shawl, which now become synonymous with her spirit." In drinking the shawl, she is devouring her dead infant [according to Barbara Scrafford, *Critique,* Fall 1989], although this is a symbolic cannibalism, unlike the butchery of the death camps or the lethal selfishness of Stella. To put it another way, Rosa is attempting to reincorporate Magda in order to mourn her.

Thus I read "The Shawl" as a story about delusion as a defense against an overwhelming reality, against loss of control, and against traumatic loss. I see it as a story about separation, isolation, death, and thwarted mourning. The three characters are together, yet each suffers alone: Stella separates herself by her selfishness and Magda by withdrawing into the substitute womb of her shawl. Magda dies alone, and Rosa is powerless either to prevent her death or even to embrace her dead baby or mourn aloud her loss. In this environment, simply being human can condemn you to death, so you must suppress your humanity. The Isolation and separation are also expressed metaphorically. Characters are never seen whole but reduced to body parts or things: Rosa is "sore breasts" and "a walking cradle," Stella has elbows like "chicken bones," Magda shows "one mite of a tooth tip . . . an elfin tombstone of white marble", and the guard is merely a helmet, "a black body like a domino and a pair of black boots." This is a vivid, terrifying world of part objects and fetish objects which never approaches the world of whole object relations.

Any infant is in a condition of helplessness and absolute dependence; through attachment to the transitional object, it begins to come to terms with reality and with the separateness of the mother as an object in her own right. If the mothering is insufficient or the environment hostile, the infant may instead latch onto a fetish object. As prisoners of the Holocaust, the teenage Stella and the grown Rosa are thrust back into the helplessness of infants, infants with a monster parent The Nazi state becomes a cannibal, annihilating and devouring its offspring. Finally, to survive such intolerable circumstances, these desperately needful characters resort to magical t1hinking. Each seizes upon Magda's shawl as a magical object, a substitute for the good mother, the only thing on which an assurance of survival or a sense of identity can be grounded. And for all three characters, the transitional object shades over into a fetish object and a healthy *illusion* becomes instead a neurotic *delusion.*

In 1983, Ozick wrote a sequel to "The Shawl" entitled "Rosa." This story takes place in Miami Beach thirty years after the events of "The Shawl"; Rosa has survived the Holocaust but is mentally unstable. She denies her daughter's death and fantasizes that Magda is a married woman, a successful doctor or professor. And she now worships as a religious relic the only object left from her daughter: the shawl. As Greenacre writes, "The relation of Illusion to the fixed delusion might be roughly compared to that of the transitional object to the fetish. "

Source: Andrew Gordon, "Cynthia Ozick's 'The Shawl' and the Transitional Object," in *Literature and Psychology,* Vol XXXX, Nos I & 2, 1994, pp 1-9.

Critical Essay #3

Scrafford is affiliated with San Francisco State University. In the following excerpt, she discusses the theme of motherhood in "The Shawl" and examines how characterization and Imagery contribute to the development of this theme.

In her award-winning short story, "The Shawl," Cynthia Ozick reveals the mind of a mother slogging her way through the ashes of the dead. Set in a Nazi concentration Camp, the story does not focus on the political decision to exterminate an entire race, nor on the crimes and their perpetrators, but on the mind of Rosa and her struggle to keep her infant alive, despite the fact that the child's only future is certain death. Ozick's short sentences and concise syntax move quickly and efficiently forward to tell the story with a minimum of rhetoric. The story is only a few pages long, and Ozick exposes Rosa's mind to her reader, capturing what might have been days or even weeks as if *it* were only a moment Her succinct story-telling gives us no direct information about Stella's relationship to Rosa and does not tell us explicitly where the story is set. Ozick focuses only on Rosa, Rosa only on Magda, and Magda only on the shawl. Containing no extraneous descriptions, scene-setting, or narration, the story is a skeleton of itself. All that is left is what gives it shape.

The story derives much of *its* power from ironic contrast. The setting is barbarous, a place built to end lives; the theme-motherhood-implies the continuity of life. Rosa struggles to keep her small daughter alive as long as possible, knowing all the while that the baby will not live. Although It would be easy for a Writer to become sentimental with such material, Ozick does not blink in her rendering of the tale Flowers and turds, butterflies and electric fences, innocence and depravity move the story rhythmically forward to the final crescendo. Ozick never explains the world we enter with her. The reader is pulled into the march without knowing where the writer *is* taking hIm or her, just as the Jews marched to their deaths without being told their destination. A young girl's legs are tumors on sticks; a child's hair is as yellow as the star sewn to its mother's coat. Then we know where we are headed.

The characters are Rosa, Magda, and Stella-a mother, her baby, and a young girl. Rosa and Magda take center stage, the shawl winding around mother and child like an umbilical cord.

Rosa knew Magda was going to we very soon; she would have been dead already, but she had been buried way deep inside the magic shawl, mistaken there for the shivering mound of Rosa' s breasts, Rosa clung to the shawl as If It covered only herself. No one took it away from her.

Rosa, of course, symbolizes the maternal instinct. A walking cradle, she desperately hides her baby from its predators, secreting her in the barracks and nursing her with dry breasts-"dead volcanoes."

Through the breast motif, Magda is strongly associated with nourishment. Her mother's breasts extinct, she learns to milk a comer of the shawl and teaches Rosa to drink the taste of a finger. Her mother gives her share of the food to Magda who, in turn, provides spiritual sustenance for Rosa. Magda's hair is like feathers; she is variously described as a moth and a butterfly, and her breath, suggestive of the spirit, is flavored with cinnamon and almond. But Magda is also the center of the ominous theme of cannibalism. Rosa seems obsessed by the idea that "someone, not even Stella, would steal Magda to eat her." "Aryan," Stella says. But Rosa hears,

"Let us devour her."

It seems odd, does it not, that the story of Rosa and Magda should begin with a paragraph devoted mainly to Stella?

Stella, cold, cold, the coldness of hell. How they walked on the roads together, Rosa with Magda curled up between sore breasts, Magda wound up in the shawl Sometimes Stella carried Magda But she was jealous of Magda. A thin girl of fourteen, too small, With thin breasts of her own, Stella wanted to be wrapped in a shawl, hidden away, asleep, rocked by the march, a baby, a round infant in arms. Magda took Rosa's nipple, and Rosa never stopped walking, a walking cradle. There was not enough milk, sometimes Magda sucked milk; then she screamed. Stella was ravenous. Her knees were tumors on sticks, her elbows chicken bones

Although Rosa and Magda are also introduced in this paragraph, each reference to the mother and child is countered with comments on Stella's character. Cold Stella. Jealous Stella. Ravenous, tumor kneed, chicken-elbowed Stella. She says little and seemingly performs only one function in the story-the stealing of little Magda's shawl, which leads to the death of the child. Although she is responsible for Magda's death, she is not in this sense necessary to the story. Anything could have happened to the shawl. Another prisoner could have taken it; it could have blown away on the ash stippled wind. Why, then, did Ozick include her? Stella does not emerge as a character in the way that Rosa and Magda do. We are not privy to her emotions. She does not laugh, cry, suck. The narrator allows us to see Magda crazed by lice, calmed by the shawl's linen milk, furious when she finally loses her little pet. We see Rosa's dried nipples, see her withered thigh hold the child secure through the night. Usurper of the shawl, tumor-legged Stella is also the focal point of Rosa's fears that Magda will be eaten. Stella-the first word in the story means "star," but Stella is not a radiant shining star, giving off energy of its own. Ozick tells us that she is cold, and the rhythm of the sentence "Stella, cold, cold, the coldness of hell" has a dirge-like quality. Stella, then, is a burned-out-a dead star. Rather than giving off light, she reflects the light of others.

Implicit in Stella's name is the idea of reflection. We know so little of her ---only through Rosa's perceptions. Stella functions as a mirror of the larger situation. In the first paragraph, Rosa and Magda are described in terms of the struggle of their oppression-the long walk, the sore breasts, and the dearth of mother's milk-while Stella is described in terms of the results of a struggle lost. She has become jealous of an infant, and, while

the author speaks of Magda's attempt to suckle and nourish herself, Stella shows the results of starvation: "Her knees were tumors on sticks, her elbows chicken bones."

Twice in the story the narrator refers to the other inmates of the camp through references to Stella. Rosa is afraid that "someone, not *even* Stella, [will] steal Magda to eat her" (emphasis added). Later, when she speaks of her Imagined voices in the humming electric fence, Rosa says that *"even* Stella said it was only an imagining" (emphasis added). In both these sentences, the use of the word "even" preceding Stella's name implies the reflection of the other inmates in Stella's impulses and perceptions.

A forerunner of the cannibalism motif is the imagery of nourishment introduced in the first paragraph: thin, dry breasts; a hungry babe; a walking cradle; tiny lips sucking air. Rosa's mother-love forces her to give to Magda beyond her physical and emotional capabilities. She has become lighter than air, a "floating angel. . . teetering on the tips of her fingernails." She is in a trance-like state, a state in which one's intellect is suspended and one's instincts take over. Rosa never considers her own needs but lives only for her child. Although she is afraid of the pitiless Stella, Rosa is also Without pity when she looks at the young girl:

They were in a place Without pity, all pity was annihilated in Rosa, she looked at Stella's bones Without pity She was sure that Stella was walling for Magda to we so she could put her teeth into the little thighs.

Stella is a reflection of the others in the camp, and Rosa's feelings toward her extend to those who share her fate. Her mothering instinct is her only surviving drive. Her milk is gone; her body is going, she is reduced, a "walking cradle," to instinct alone. As her daughter enters the arena screaming for her shawl, Rosa does not react with her mind but With her body. A "tide of commands" hammers in Rosa's nipples, the physical emblem of motherhood. "Fetch," they tell her, "get, bring!," reducing language to its simplest form, suggestive of the way a trainer speaks to animals. The "grainy sad voices crowd her," telling her "to hold up the shawl, high; . . . to shake it, to whip With It, to unfurl it like a flag," in one last attempt to satisfy Magda's needs. At the moment of Magda's impact, the voices of instinct-in a mad, frenzied growling urge Rosa to the little pile of bones But this time the voices that signify maternal instinct conflict with another instinct in Rosa, one she is for the first time free to respond to-the instinct of self-preservation. She does not run to her dead child's body "because if she ran they would shoot," and if she screamed, they would also shoot. The wolf s screech ascending through her body and the instinctive reaction of a mother to the death of her young oppose the will to survive as she stifles her scream with the magic shawl. She says she is "swallowing" the wolf's screech, but she also seems to be trying to ingest the shawl, tasting her daughter's saliva, drinking it dry.

In this powerful final picture, all of the story's themes and Images coalesce. Rosa is now reduced to a wild animal, a howling wolf, suggesting the previous bestial images: a vulnerable baby squirrel in a nest that becomes a lice-crazed rat, a grinning tiger. We are reminded also of Magda's sucking of the shawl, and "the shawl's good flavor, milk of linen." Rosa sucks the shawl until it dries, Just as Magda drinks all that Rosa's withered

nipples can offer. Magda's cinnamon and almond breath has permeated her shawl, which now becomes synonymous with her spirit. Stella and the cannibalism Rosa associates with her are also implicitly present in this scene The young girl symbolizes the ashes of the death camps. She belongs to those who have lost their humanity and who, like biological creatures only, struggle merely to stay alive. These are cold stars, who have no life of their own. They bring only their bodies to their imprisonment. Rosa is obsessed by the fear that Stella will cannibalize Magda, but she also knows that others also want what she suspects Stella of wanting.

As Rosa stuffs the shawl into her mouth, drinking the "cinnamon and almond depth of Magda's saliva," the cannibalism motif is revealed not to be the desperate act of a degraded and debased fourteen-year-old, but a symbolic final frantic attempt by Rosa to protect her offspring. Rosa is reduced to complete primitivity, the voices of instinct growling within her. Like a cornered wild animal, she devours her young in the form of the shawl Many animals, when cornered by a predator, do the same, for if the mother dies, the young will suffer a far worse fate at the jowls of the attacker. Rosa's motherhood is her total existence. The only parts of her body described for us are her breasts and her thighs. Her every move is dictated by the needs of her child, to the exclusion of all others She feels no pity for her fellow prisoners, not even Stella. A "walking cradle," she lives only for the survival of her young.

In "The Shawl," Ozick gives us a mother frantically trying to nurture her child in the ashes of the dead. Like a panicked animal, she desperately tries to hide her little squirrel from the predator. She knows Magda will not live, yet she protects her with the magic shawl, gives her own meager offerings of food to the silent little mouth, and guards her at night with her own body. Stella and the others, reflections of the massacred six million, fade into the shadows, as the author hones in on Rosa to show us what it is like to be a mother in the time of the hunted.

Source: Barbara Scrafford, "Nature's Silent Scream: A Commentary on Cynthia Ozick's 'The Shawl'," in *Critique. Studies* in *Contemporary Fiction,* Vol. XXXI, *No.* I, Fall, 1989, pp. 11-15

Critical Essay #4

Berger teaches at Syracuse University. In the following excerpt, he argues that Ozick's use of symbolism in "The Shawl" contributes to the story's theme of Jewish endurance in the face of horrendous suffering

Cynthia Ozick has written that "stories ought to judge and interpret the world." But universal meaning can only be derived from particularistic experience, "Literature," she has written, "is the recognition of the particular." Responding to the Holocaust requires not only an encounter with, but a struggle to redeem from, evil. Ozick's "redemptive literature" is embedded in biblical, rabbinic, and mystical symbolism. . . .

"The Shawl" (1980), ... is a unique story because it directly confronts the horrors of a death camp experience. The tale, told from the perspective of an omniscient narrator, concerns three Jewesses; Rosa, her infant daughter Magda, and her adolescent niece Stella. The story centers around Rosa's unsuccessful attempt to keep Magda-who is wrapped in a mysterious shawl-alive. In the brief space of two pages Ozick paints the familiar but no less terrifying landscape of death and torment which was the fate of Europe's Jews; forced marches, starvation, dehumanization, the filth of death camps, murder, and the indifference of the world. She spares no detail of Jewish misery. For example, Rosa contemplates giving Magda to a stranger during the course of their march toward certain death. Rosa thinks, however, that if she left the line of prisoners she would be shot. But supposing she managed to hand the shawl-wrapped infant to an unknown woman, would the stranger take the precious package? Or would she drop it, splitting Magda's head open? Countless thousands of Jewish women had to confront this dilemma, one which makes King Solomon's decision seem a pale thing in comparison.

Both on the march and in the camp itself, the shawl provides life-giving sustenance. When Rosa's own sore breasts were dry, Magda sucked on the comer of the shawl and "milked it instead," with the smell of "cinnamon and almonds" emanating from Magda's mouth. Ozick twice describes the nurturer as a "magic shawl"; one which could "nourish an infant for three days and three nights ".

Although pitifully undernourished, Magda lived long enough to walk. Rosa gave the child almost all of her own food. Stella, on the other hand, was envious of Magda whom she gazed at "like a young cannibal," and to whom she gave no food. Rosa's premonitions about Magda's impending death grew increasingly strong. The Jews were, writes Ozick, "in a place without pity." Toddling across the roll call area without her shawl Magda is murdered by a guard who throws her onto the camp's electrified fence. Rosa, watching from a distance, is helpless; able only to stuff the shawl into her own mouth in order to swallow "the wolf's screech ascending now through the ladder of her skeleton." Rosa tasted "the cinnamon and almond depth of Magda' s saliva," drinking the shawl dry.

Ozick has masterfully combined covenant Judaism and a mystical parapsychology as responses to the pervasive hopelessness of the death camps. The magic shawl is a

literary symbol of the tallit. Although women were freed from the so-called time-bound *mitzvot* (commandments), such as wearing a prayer shawl, Jewesses have donned this ritual object. The Talmud tells, for example, that Rabbi Judah the Prince, editor of the Mishnah (second century C. E.), affixed *tzitzit* (tallit fringes) to his wife's apron (Menahot 43a). Wrapping oneself in a prayer shawl is tantamount to being surrounded by the holiness and protection of the commandments; as well as conforming to the will of God. The wearer of the tallit is a member of the covenant community. Ozick's shawl/tallit is a talisman which protects both Rosa and Magda when they either wear or hold it. Separated from the shawl, Magda dies. The shawl saves Rosa as well. If she had screamed at her daughter's murder she would herself have been murdered since the Nazis, amplifying the edict of Pharaoh, had decreed that having a Jewish child was an offense punishable by death.

Rosa is also portrayed as being literally above the earth, or able to overcome history. Ozick employs a variety of words to suggest that Rosa, like her subsequent literary heir Feingold in "Levitation," can fly. For example, Rosa, while on the march, was "already a floating angel." Magda's mother "flew, she could fly, she was only air." Magda, for her part, is also described in flight imagery. Riding on the shoulders of her Nazi murderer, she is "high up, elevated." She appeared hurtling toward the death fence -as a "butterfly touching a silver vine." Rosa is also clairaudient; she hears "grainy sad voices" coming from the fence. What do these phenomena signify?

Ozick strongly implies that the camps, designed to turn Jews into matter and then to destroy that matter, although successful to an awesome and staggering degree, were not able to achieve complete domination of the Jewish soul. The peculiar aroma of Cinnamon and almonds, itself so out of place in the midst of death, corpses, and wind bearing the black ash from crematoria, evokes a quasi-mystical image of the *besamim* (spice) box. Jews sniff the *besamim* at the *havadalah* ceremony which marks the outgoing of the Sabbath, thereby sustaining themselves for the rigors and tribulations of the profane or ordinary days of the week. By utilizing the prayer shawl and spice box imagery, and paranormal phenomena usually associated With the mystical element of Judaism, Ozick's tale conveys the message that the bleakness of the historical moment is not the final chapter in Jewish existence. Jewish religious creativity and covenantal symbolism can occur even under the most extreme conditions. . . .

Source: Alan R. Berger, "Holocaust Responses I' Judaism as a Religious Value System," in *Crisis and Covenant: The*

Holocaust in American Jewish Fiction, State University of New York Press, 1985, pp 39-90

Adaptations

'The Shawl" was adapted as a play by Cynthia Ozick. Directed by the well-known film director Sidney Lumet, the play was performed (as *Blue Light)* in 1994 at the Bay Street Theatre in Sag Harbor, New York, and in 1996 at the Jewish Repertory Theater, New York City.

An audio version of "The Shawl," read by actress Claire Bloom, is available on the National Public Radio series "Jewish Short Stories from Eastern Europe and Beyond."

Topics for Further Study

Imagine that Rosa and Stella both survived the concentration camps and are alive today. Pick one controversial social issue, such as abortion or welfare. Discuss the position you think each character would take on this issue and why.

Rosa stuffs the shawl into her mouth to keep herself from screaming when Magda is killed. Discuss the significance of this act.

"The Shawl" is written from the third-person omniscient point of view. Why do you think Ozick chose that point of view? Do you think that first-person narration might have worked better? Why or why not?

Read another contemporary Jewish tale, such as Isaac Bashevis Singer's "Gimpel the Fool," or Ozick's "The Pagan Rabbi." How are these stories influenced by Jewish religion, lore, tradition?

Compare and Contrast

1930s: Adolf Hitler's persecution of the Jews in Germany begins in 1933. Discrimination gives way to the loss of all their rights as citizens. In 1938, the Nazis destroy the country's synagogues and begin imprisoning Jews and others in concentration camps, like the one depicted in "The Shawl." The Final Solution escalates throughout World War II, ending only in 1945 when the camps are liberated by the Allies.

1980s: The historical reality of the Holocaust is questioned by the largely discredited fringe organization, the Institute for Historical Review, through articles in the Institute's publication, *The Journal of Historical Review.*

1990s: New information about the Holocaust continues to make headlines. In 1995, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) admits Its "moral failure" to come to the aid of the Jews during the Holocaust. In 1997 the organization releases its wartime files Among the files is an exchange of letters from May, 1940, in which the World Jewish Congress asks the ICRC to investigate reports of the mass murder of Jewish prisoners of war. The ICRC responded several months later that the reports were unfounded. Also in 1997, Swiss banks release information on the dormant accounts opened by Holocaust victims before World War II. The banks are accused of hoarding the money of Holocaust victims.

1940s: The horror of the Holocaust is reflected in the diary of a young Jewish girl who lives hidden away with her family above a shop in Amsterdam. *The Diary of Anne Frank* is published in 1947, two years after she dies in a concentration camp.

1980s: *Schindler's List* is written by Thomas Keneally in 1982. The story focuses on Oskar Schindler, a German who saves the Jews working in his factory from the gas chambers. Other Holocaust survivor stories are told III works such as *To Save a Life: Stories of Jewish Rescue,* in 1984

1990s: The Holocaust becomes a topic of interest to the motion picture industry *Schindler's List* is made into a movie by Steven Spielberg in 1993. The film wins seven Academy Awards, including Best Picture. In 1997, *The Populist,* a movie about Adolf Hitler's rise to power, which was aided by Ernst Hanfstaegl, the man who introduced Hitler to the wealthy financiers of the Third Reich, is planned.

What Do I Read Next?

Ozick's works of non-fiction-Art *and Ardor,* published in 1987, *Metaphor and Memory,* published in 1989, and *Fame and Folly,* published in 1996-discuss literature, Ozick's feelings about her art, and her ideas about the relationship between art and history.

Ozick's story "Rosa," published ill *The New Yorker* ill 1983, then in a short story collection paired with "The Shawl," picks up the story of Rosa and Stella some thirty years after the final scene of "The Shawl." It carries over some of the themes and images from the earlier story.

Elie Wiesel's memoir *Night* (1960) portrays Wiesel's own experiences as a teenager imprisoned ill two concentration camps, Auschwitz and Buchenwald. At least one Critic, Elaine Kauvar, believes there are allusions to *Night* in "The Shawl."

Anne Frank's *The Diary of Anne Frank* describes the life of a Jewish family trying to elude capture by the Nazis in Amsterdam during World Warn. It is written by a young Jewish girl, a girl of about the age that Stella is in "The Shawl."

Further Study

Chartock, Roselle and Jack Spence, eds. *The Holocaust Years' Society on Trial,* Bantam Books, 1978.

One of many histories of the Holocaust, Chartock and Spencer's book is notable for Its clear chronology of the events in Europe from 1933 to 1945, its discussions of prejudice and scapegoat, and behavior under stress, and many essays in the words of witnesses and of Nazis themselves.

Cohen, Sarah Blacher. *Cynthia Ozick's Comic Art. From Levity to Liturgy,* Indiana University Press, 1994

Cohen concentrates on Ozick's use of irony in her work

Lowin, Joseph. *Cynthia Ozick,* Twayne Publishers, 1988 Lowin's book provides an excellent overview of Ozick's life and work. It includes a biographical section and sections on many of Ozick's works of fiction, including "The Shawl."

Ozick, Cynthia. *Art & Ardor,* Knopf, 1983.

A collection of Ozick's essays about literature and writing, including essays discussing her struggles to discover what It means to be a Jew, and the writer's material-including the Holocaust.

Ozick, Cynthia. *Fame & Folly,* Knopf, 1996.

A collection of Ozick's essays about literature and writing Includes essays on the relationship of the artist to his or her material, and the relationship of history to literature.

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Kauvar, Elaine M *Cynthia Ozick's Fiction. Tradition & Invention,* Indiana University Press, 1993.

Klingenstein, Suzanne. "Destructive Intimacy: The Shoah Between Mother and Daughter in Fictions by Cynthia Ozick, Norma Rosen and Rebecca Goldstein," in *Studies in American Jewish Literature,* Vol. 11, No 2, Fall, 1992, pp 162- 73.

Prose, Francine. A review of "The Shawl," in *The New York Times Book Review,* September 10, 1989, p 1,39.

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Short Stories for Students (SSfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, SSfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of SSfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of SSfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in SSfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by SSfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

SSfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Short Stories for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SSfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the SSfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Short Stories for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Short Stories for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from SSfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Short Stories for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from SSfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Short Stories for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of SSfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Short Stories for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of SSfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Short Stories for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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