



The Nose

Nikolai Gogol

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”The Nose” is a satirical short story by Nikolai Gogol. Written between 1835 and 1836, it tells of a St. Petersburg official whose nose leaves his face and develops a life of its own. As the unreliable narrator Gogol notes, the story ”contains much that is highly implausible”, while an earlier version of the story ended with Kovalyov waking and realizing that the story was indeed a dream. Without the awakening, however, the story becomes a precursor of magical realism, as an unreal element is woven into a realistic narration. Peace also notes that some critics have interpreted the story as referring to a castration complex: the removal of Kovalyov’s nose (and its developing a mind of its own) threaten both his chances of acquiring a position of power and of being a success with women. In Russia, a version has appeared which substituted ”...” for the word ”nos” so that the reader would be inclined to interpret it as ”khui”, the Russian taboo word for penis. It can be said that Kovalyov equates the loss of his nose with castration, emasculation, and impotence to a certain degree.

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