

## Nikolai Gogol Vladimir Nabokov

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### The Inspector General

202-213) For the last two decades of his career Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov ... 277-282) One of Vladimir Nabokov's truly immortal passages lies buried in one of his least-known books, his critical study ...

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Nikolai Gogol was the most idiosyncratic of the great Russian novelists of the 19th century and lived a tragically short life which was as chaotic as the lives of the characters he created. This biography begins with Gogol's death and ends with his birth, an inverted structure typical of both Gogol and Nabokov. The biographer proceeds to establish the relationship between Gogol and his novels, especially with regard to "nose-consciousness", a peculiar feature of Russian life and letters, which finds its apotheosis in Gogol's own life and prose. There are more expressions and proverbs concerning the nose in Russian than in any other language in the world. Nabokov's style in this biography is comic, but as always leads to serious issues—in this case, an appreciation of the distinctive "sense of the physical" inherent in Gogol's work. Nabokov describes how Gogol's life and literature mingled, and explains the structure and style of Gogol's prose in terms of the novelist's life.

'One of the most exhilarating, engaging, and original works ever written by one writer about another' ELIZABETH HARDWICK Nikolai Gogol was one of the great geniuses of nineteenth century Russian literature, with a command of the irrational unmatched by any writer before or since. His strange tales, though often read as forceful demands for social change, were displays of the fantasies of the human spirit. In this ideal marriage of subject and critic, Nabokov analyses his endlessly inventive compatriot, focusing on the masterpieces Dead Souls, 'The Overcoat' and 'The Government Inspector'. Misunderstood by his contemporaries, mishandled by theatre directors and ending his life mistreated by doctors - with medicinal leeches hanging from his exceptional nose - it took Nabokov to give Gogol, 'the oddest Russian in Russia', the critical biography he and his singular, brilliant work deserve.

The acclaimed author of Lolita offers unique insight into works by James Joyce, Franz Kafka, Jane Austen, and others—with an introduction by John Updike. In the 1940s, when Vladimir Nabokov first embarked on his academic career in the United States, he brought with him hundreds of original lectures on the authors he most admired. For two decades those lectures served as the basis for Nabokov's teaching, first at Wellesley and then at Cornell, as he introduced undergraduates to the delights of great fiction. This volume collects Nabokov's famous lectures on Western European literature, with analysis and commentary on Charles Dickens's Bleak House, Gustav Flaubert's Madam Bovary, Marcel Proust's The Walk by Swann's Place, Robert Louis Stevenson's "The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde," and other works. This volume also includes photographic reproductions of Nabokov's original notes, revealing his own edits, underlined passages, and more. Edited and with a Foreword by Fredson Bowers Introduction by John Updike

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An NYRB Classics Original The first of the great Russian novels and one of the indisputable masterpieces of world literature, *Dead Souls* is the tale of Chichikov, an affably cunning con man who causes consternation in a small Russian town when he shows up out of nowhere proposing to buy title to serfs who, though dead as doornails, are still property on paper. What can he have up his sleeve, the local landowners wonder, even as some rush to unload what isn't of any use to them anyway, while others seek to negotiate the best deal possible, and others yet hold on to their dead for dear life, since if somebody wants what you have then no matter what don't give it away. Chichikov's scheme soon encounters obstacles, but he is never without resource, and as he stumbles forward as best he can, Gogol paints a wonderfully comic picture of Russian life that also serves as a biting satire of a society as corrupt as it is cynical and silly. At once a wild phantasmagoria and a work of exacting realism, *Dead Souls* is a supremely living work of art that spills over with humor and passion and absurdity. Donald Rayfield's vigorous new translation corrects the mistakes and omissions of earlier versions while capturing the vivid speech rhythms of the original. It also offers a fuller text of the unfinished second part of the book by combining material from Gogol's two surviving drafts into a single compelling narrative. This is a tour de force of art and scholarship—and the most authoritative, accurate, and readable edition of *Dead Souls* available in English.

Written in the 1830s and early 1840s, these comic stories tackle life behind the cold and elegant facade of the Imperial capital from the viewpoints of various characters, such as a collegiate assessor who one day finds that his nose has detached itself from his face and risen the ranks to become a state councillor ('The Nose'), a painter and a lieutenant whose romantic pursuits meet with contrasting degrees of success ('Nevsky Prospect') and a lowly civil servant whose existence desperately unravels when he loses his prized new coat ('The Overcoat'). Also including the 'Diary of Madman', these Petersburg Tales paint a critical yet hilarious portrait of a city riddled with pomposity and self-importance, masterfully juxtaposing nineteenth-century realism with madcap surrealism, and combining absurdist farce with biting satire.

Fresh, stylish new translations of Gogol's greatest short stories collected in a beautiful edition Admired by writers from Nabokov to Bulgakov to George Saunders, Gogol is considered one of the more enigmatic of the Russian greats. He only wrote one novel, *Dead Souls*, and destroyed much of his later work, so his stories constitute his major output. In this collection, beautifully and skilfully translated by Oliver Ready, Gogol's three greatest St Petersburg stories - 'The Nose', 'The Overcoat' and 'The Diary of a Madman' - are presented alongside three masterworks set in the Ukrainian and Russian provinces, demonstrating the breadth of Gogol's work. Gogol's extraordinary work is characterised by his idiosyncratic and often very funny sensibility, and these stories offer us his unique, original and marvellously skewed perspective on the world.

This innovative study of one of the most important writers of Russian Golden Age literature argues that Gogol adopted a deliberate hybrid identity to mimic and mock the pretensions of the dominant culture.

“Wonderful, compulsively readable, delicious” personal correspondences, spanning decades in the life and literary career of the author of *Lolita* (The Washington Post Book World). An icon of twentieth-century literature, Vladimir Nabokov was a novelist, poet, and playwright, whose personal life was a fascinating story in itself. This collection of more than four hundred letters

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chronicles the author's career, recording his struggles in the publishing world, the battles over *Lolita*, and his relationship with his wife, among other subjects, and gives a surprising look at the personality behind the creator of such classics as *Pale Fire* and *Invitation to a Beheading*. "Dip in anywhere, and delight follows." —John Updike

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