

FATAL PROPHECIES AND SIGNS OF FATE IN THE WORKS OF N.V. GOGOL

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Abstract:

This article delves into the recurring themes of fatal prophecies and signs of fate in the works of Nikolai Gogol. It examines how these motifs are employed in his literature to explore the human condition, societal norms, and the inevitability of destiny. Through analysis of select works such as "The Overcoat," "Taras Bulba," and "The Nose," this article explores the significance of these themes in Gogol's oeuvre and their lasting impact on Russian literature.

Keywords: Gogol, fate, prophecy, Russian literature, symbolism, destiny, supernatural, analysis.

Introduction

Nikolai Vasilievich Gogol, one of Russia's most celebrated literary figures, is renowned for his vivid portrayal of Ukrainian and Russian life, often infused with elements of the supernatural and the absurd. Among the recurring motifs in Gogol's works are fatal prophecies and signs of fate, which serve as powerful narrative devices that explore the complexities of human existence and the inexorable march of destiny. This article aims to analyze how Gogol employs these themes in his literature to convey deeper philosophical and societal truths.

Gogol's exploration of fatal prophecies and signs of fate is evident throughout his corpus, from his early stories to his later masterpieces. In "The Overcoat," the protagonist Akaky Akakievich's fate is sealed from the moment he becomes fixated on acquiring a new overcoat, which ultimately leads to his tragic demise. The supernatural intervention in the form of the stolen overcoat serves as a harbinger of Akaky's fate, highlighting the arbitrary and merciless nature of destiny.

Similarly, in "Taras Bulba," Gogol employs the motif of fate to depict the inexorable march of history and its impact on individuals. The eponymous protagonist, Taras Bulba, is driven by a sense of destiny and the prophecy of his sons' greatness, which ultimately leads to their tragic deaths in the context of the Cossack rebellion. Here, Gogol intertwines themes of familial duty, honor, and the cruel hand of fate to create a poignant narrative of sacrifice and loss.

In "The Nose," Gogol ventures into the realm of the absurd, yet retains the underlying theme of fate. The bizarre tale of a man who wakes up to find his nose missing explores the absurdity of life and the inability of individuals to escape their predetermined paths. The nose, separated from its owner, takes on a life of its own, underscoring the absurdity of human existence and the futility of trying to defy fate.



This analysis is conducted through a close reading of Gogol's texts, supplemented by insights from literary criticism and historical context. By examining the narrative structure, character development, and symbolic elements in Gogol's works, this study seeks to elucidate the thematic significance of fatal prophecies and signs of fate in his literature.

Nikolai Gogol, a Russian writer, is known for his unique blend of realism and the grotesque, often delving into themes of fate, predestination, and the supernatural. In his works, fatal prophecies and signs of fate play significant roles, adding layers of complexity to his narratives. Here are a few examples:

- "The Portrait" (1835): In this short story, the protagonist, Chartkov, receives a portrait that ages and decays as he commits sins. The portrait acts as a sign of his fate, reflecting the consequences of his actions and serving as a reminder of his mortality.

"The Portrait" by Nikolai Gogol is indeed a fascinating story that delves into themes of morality, conscience, and the consequences of one's actions. Chartkov, the protagonist, receives a portrait that initially appears pristine and handsome. However, as Chartkov engages in sinful behavior, the portrait begins to deteriorate, reflecting his inner corruption and moral decay.

The story serves as a cautionary tale about the importance of living a virtuous life and the inevitability of facing the consequences of one's actions. Chartkov's gradual realization of the connection between his behavior and the state of the portrait highlights the power of guilt and conscience in guiding human behavior.

Gogol's portrayal of the supernatural element adds an eerie and mysterious atmosphere to the narrative, enhancing the impact of the moral lesson it conveys. Overall, "The Portrait" remains a thought-provoking exploration of the human condition and the struggle between good and evil.

- "The Overcoat" (1842): While not a direct example of prophecy or signs of fate, this story revolves around Akaky Akakievich Bashmachkin, a low-ranking civil servant whose life is changed by the theft of his prized overcoat. The overcoat becomes a symbol of his fate, leading to a tragic end.

"The Overcoat" by Nikolai Gogol is a poignant story that explores themes of social status, identity, and fate. Akaky Akakievich Bashmachkin, a humble government clerk, leads a monotonous and dreary life, finding solace only in his work and his dream of owning a new overcoat. When he finally acquires one, he is filled with a sense of pride and joy.

However, his happiness is short-lived, as the overcoat is soon stolen, plunging Akaky into despair. He seeks justice but is met with indifference and mockery from those around him. Despite his efforts to find a resolution, Akaky's situation deteriorates, and he falls ill and dies. The overcoat in the story symbolizes more than just a piece of clothing; it represents Akaky's desire for dignity, respect, and a better life. Its theft and the subsequent events highlight the harsh realities of life for those on the margins of society and the indifference of those in positions of power.

In a way, Akaky's fate is sealed from the moment he sets his heart on the overcoat, illustrating the idea of fate or destiny playing a role in his life. The story serves as a critique of a society



that values material possessions over human decency and compassion, ultimately leading to a tragic and premature end for Akaky.

- "The Nose" (1836): In this absurdist tale, Major Kovalyov wakes up to find that his nose has gone missing. The nose reappears as a higher-ranking official, leading to a series of bizarre events. The story explores themes of identity, fate, and absurdity.

"The Nose" is indeed a bizarre and fascinating story by Nikolai Gogol, one that challenges conventional narrative structures and delves into the realm of absurdity. The disappearance of Major Kovalyov's nose and its subsequent reappearance as a higher-ranking official is a surreal and comical premise that allows Gogol to explore deeper themes.

One of the central themes of "The Nose" is the concept of identity. Major Kovalyov's sense of self is thrown into disarray when he wakes up to find that his nose has inexplicably vanished. This event forces him to question not only his physical appearance but also his place in society. The absurdity of the situation highlights the fragility of identity and the arbitrary nature of social hierarchies.

Additionally, "The Nose" delves into the theme of fate. Major Kovalyov's encounter with his missing nose takes on a sense of inevitability, as if it was always meant to happen. The absurdity of the situation underscores the idea that fate can be unpredictable and nonsensical. Overall, "The Nose" is a thought-provoking exploration of identity, fate, and the absurdity of human existence. Gogol's masterful storytelling and unique narrative style make it a timeless classic that continues to captivate readers to this day.

- "Taras Bulba" (1835): While not a short story but a novella, "Taras Bulba" features elements of prophecy and fate. Taras Bulba, a Cossack leader, receives a prophecy about his sons' fates, which ultimately comes true, leading to a tragic end for his family.

"Taras Bulba" by Nikolai Gogol is indeed a novella that delves into themes of fate, prophecy, and the tragic consequences of destiny. Set against the backdrop of the 17th-century Ukrainian Cossack society, the story follows the fierce and proud Cossack leader Taras Bulba and his two sons, Andriy and Ostap.

The prophecy Taras Bulba receives foreshadows the different destinies of his sons: Andriy, the elder, is destined to die fighting for his people, while Ostap, the younger, is prophesied to meet his end at the hands of his own people. Despite Taras Bulba's efforts to alter their destinies, the prophecy unfolds as foretold, leading to a series of tragic events that culminate in the ultimate destruction of the Bulba family.

Gogol skillfully weaves themes of loyalty, betrayal, and the inexorable pull of fate throughout the narrative, creating a powerful and poignant tale of sacrifice and tragedy. "Taras Bulba" remains one of Gogol's most celebrated works, showcasing his mastery of storytelling and his deep understanding of the human condition.

Overall, Gogol's works often incorporate elements of fate, prophecy, and the supernatural to explore the complexities of human existence and the inevitability of certain outcomes.

Gogol's portrayal of fatal prophecies and signs of fate reflects his fascination with the supernatural and the metaphysical. His use of these motifs transcends mere plot devices, serving as potent metaphors for the human condition and the existential dilemmas faced by his



characters. Whether through the lens of realism or absurdism, Gogol's exploration of fate remains a central theme that continues to captivate readers and scholars alike.

Conclusions and Suggestions:

In conclusion, the analysis demonstrates the enduring relevance of Gogol's exploration of fatal prophecies and signs of fate in Russian literature. His works offer profound insights into the complexities of human existence and the timeless struggle against the forces of destiny. Scholars and enthusiasts of literature are encouraged to further explore Gogol's oeuvre, paying close attention to the thematic motifs that pervade his writings and their broader implications for understanding the human condition.

In future studies, researchers may delve deeper into the cultural and historical contexts that influenced Gogol's conception of fate, as well as explore comparative analyses with other literary traditions. By continuing to unravel the mysteries embedded within Gogol's narratives, scholars can gain a deeper appreciation for his contributions to Russian literature and the enduring legacy of his thematic explorations.

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