

## THE THEME OF ART IN GOGOL'S STORY "PORTRAIT"

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### ABSTRACT

The article reveals the specificity of the theme of art in the work of N.V. Gogol. On the example of the story "Portrait", the theme of art and its constituent images and motifs are revealed.

**Keywords:** Portrait, art, painting, artist.

### INTRODUCTION

In N. V. Gogol's story "Portrait", the theme of art occupies a central place, revealing the complex relationship between creativity, morality and the inner world of a person. The author considers art as the highest manifestation of the divine, capable of transforming the soul and raising it to the ideals of goodness and truth. At the same time, the writer shows how the pursuit of material well-being and fame can destroy an artist and his talent. "Gogol said: in order to create beauty, you need to be beautiful yourself; the artist must be a whole and moral person; his life should be as perfect as his art. Service to beauty is a moral deed and a religious feat" [10, p. 29].

N. Kotlyarevsky in his article "The Artistic, Philosophical and Autobiographical Significance of the Story "Portrait" argued that Gogol "sought to convey to the reader a sense of true inspiration and art" [5, p. 226]. The portrait became a hymn to art, a deeper and more complete repetition of the ideas that the writer had developed earlier in his work.

Y. Lotman in his work "Artistic Space in Gogol's Prose" noted that Gogol's artistic perception was formed under the influence of theater and fine arts, "fragments of works represent verbal descriptions of theatrical scenes and painting" [6, p. 628]. In the writer's work, such "verbal descriptions" of pictorial images perform a variety of functions: they refer to well-known models of art, acquire a special meaning depending on the context, creating a complex montage or acquiring an ironic and parodic shade. In addition, these descriptions lay the foundations for reflection on the nature of art and the moral qualities of the artist.

The main theme of the story is the comprehension of the role of art in human life. Gogol raises the question of the nature of true and false art, and what role the spiritual component plays in it.

The story "Portrait" consists of two parts. The first tells about the tragic fate of the artist Chartkov, the second reveals the history of the appearance of a mysterious portrait of a usurer. The work raises such questions as: the mystery of creativity, the mystery of the human spirit, ways of comprehending art. The writer emphasizes the importance of loyalty to one's own talent, faith in one's vocation and incorruptibility in the face of temptations.

The mysterious portrait evokes contradictory feelings in Chartkov: fear and a strange attraction: "He quietly moved away from the portrait, turned away in the other direction and tried not to look at it, and meanwhile the eye involuntarily, of its own accord, squinted, looked around it. At last he was even frightened to walk up and down the room; it seemed to him as

if at that very moment someone else would begin to walk behind him, and each time he timidly looked back" [4, p. 68]. In the night, tormented by thoughts of poverty and the difficult fate of the artist, Chartkov notices gold in the hands of a usurer, which becomes a symbol of temptation and trial. In Gogol's work, the characters do not conduct a direct dialogue. The money received changed Chartkov's fate: he gains wealth, career and popularity, but his inner world begins to collapse. Money plunges him into an environment where cold calculation and spiritual devastation reign.

The writer notes the lack of light, beauty and harmony in the world around him. Color in paintings is of a special kind. His canvases begin to be filled with bright, flashy colors, and instead of authentic images, superficial images of fashionable ladies and artificially decorated characters appear. The artist increasingly makes concessions to customers, creating works that cater to the tastes of society, but lack depth.

Thus, using the example of the fate of the artist Chartkov, the author shows how the temptations of wealth and fame can destroy talent and sincerity, and the choice between material goods and loyalty to art becomes the most important theme of the story.

A turning point in the development of the theme of creativity was an encounter with a great work of art brought from Italy. Chartkov sees the light for a moment: he is seized by a sense of lost youth, and the sparks of talent flare up again. This moment illuminated his life, the hero understands that true talent cannot be bought for money. This episode symbolizes the transition from delusion to the realization of the truth.

The hero's epiphany turned out to be short-lived. Chartkov's spiritual recovery became impossible: he exhausted himself and his gift. At the sight of the painting, "pure and beautiful as a bride" [4, p. 88], he wanted to find flaws in it, but the words froze on his lips. Shocked, he ran out of the hall, realizing the abyss between his lost purpose and the sublime beauty of art. The main idea of the story is centered around the mysterious portrait of the usurer: "It was no longer a copy from life, it was that strange vividness that would illuminate the face of a dead man rising from the grave" [4, p. 68]. This painting played a fatal role: one artist lost his talent because of it, the other chose the monastic path. In the finale, the portrait disappears, showing its cyclical, sinister fate – it will be found again and bring misfortune to the next victim.

The story "Portrait" reveals the ideal of an artist who lives for art. Gogol admires the greatness of the master's spirit, who devoted himself to creativity away from the worldly vanity and the opinions of others, echoing the prototype of the young artist – A.A. Ivanov. Ivanov, with his dedication to art, became the embodiment of the "ideal master" for the writer [3, p. 83].

Gogol emphasizes that true service to art requires moral strength, courage and responsibility for talent before society. Chartkov, deprived of these qualities, could not withstand the test, unlike the master, who reached spiritual heights through humility and self-denial.

V.V. Lepakhin emphasizes that the story traces the opposition of two types of art: "The hidden and explicit juxtaposition of the two artists in Gogol's story can be traced as the opposition of icon painting and painting, the icon painter and the painter, the icon and the painting" [6, p. 292].

The story of N. V. Gogol "Portrait" poses important questions to the reader about the nature of art, its moral and spiritual foundations. Gogol perceives art not only as an aesthetic category, but also as a moral and spiritual phenomenon. True creativity is the pursuit of the

ideals of goodness and truth. An artist must be a morally integral person, otherwise his talent will inevitably degrade.

In the story, true art is presented as a moral feat associated with self-sacrifice, while false art leads to a spiritual fall. Service to art requires not only talent, but also high spiritual discipline. Art should elevate the soul, not destroy it. The ending of the story is a warning that the rejection of these principles leads to collapse. True art is impossible without inner harmony and striving for higher ideals.

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