

Title: Mischief and Mistification: The Literary Stunts of Nikolai Gogol

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Throughout Russia's history, writers have consistently struggled with censors who imposed restrictions on their craft and were obstacles in the way of successful publication. This paper evaluates the censorship situation under which Gogol wrote, and identifies his story "Povest' o tom, kak possorilsia Ivan Ivanovich s Ivanom Nikiforovichem" as a criticism of the conditions censors of the time imposed on writers. At the root of the Ivans' argument is a language issue which is ultimately left to be refereed by the authorities. Ivan Ivanovich represents the censorship apparatus of the Russian state while Ivan Nikiforovich represents that of the intelligentsia. This paper recognizes parallels between censors and writers of Gogol's time represented within "The Two Ivans," and compares them with historical events relative to the story's characters. Also discussed within the study are some methods Gogol used to mystify his readers. The roll of snuff, for example, plays an important role in the way in which the events in the story unfold. While considering criticism that has thus far been established, the study offers a new interpretive perspective of "The Two Ivans."

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