



Mohamed Khider University of Biskra
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Masculine Insecurities in Nikolai Gogol's *The Nose*

Noureddine Bendouma & Salim Kerboua

Abstract

Men seek to assert their masculine identities through the qualities of independence, courage strength, leadership and dominance. Contrarily, they seek to conceal any traits related to the weaker feminine identity. Masculine attributes cause many divides amongst scholars in academia. Some attribute masculinity to social constructions, others to biological and cultural factors. Discussions about masculinity have taken a central part not only in academic research, but also in literary productions. Nineteenth century Russian literature is no exception. In Nikolai Gogol's satirical short story, *The Nose*, the author attempts to show through the story of Major Kovalyov the significance of the role that masculinity plays in establishing the identity of men in a patriarchal society. Gogol uses satire to comment on male insecurities through the use of symbolism. *The Nose* portrays masculinity as an essential element linked to the obtainment of power, to the attraction between men and women, and to the perception of one's own value, albeit in a burlesque style.

Key words: *The Nose*, masculinity, insecurity, male identity