



## Inspector and Other Plays

*Nikolai Gogol*

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(Applause Books). Eric Bentley brings to the attention of Gogol's still growing American public not only a new version of Inspector, but three other dramatic works: The Marriage, Gamblers and A Madman's Diary, the last-named being Bentley's dramatization of a famous Gogol story. In a critical preface, Bentley finds all four works to be a Gogolian treatment of love or the lack of love and by the same token, thoroughly original works of dramatic art. Also includes a piece on Gamblers by the eminent Polish critic Jan Kott.

## Inspector and Other Plays Details

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Author : Nikolai Gogol

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### Ellie says

The Government Inspector is one of my favourite plays of all time.

It is satire at its absolute best; it shows the problems at every level of society, every occupation and without any worry for what people might think.

Set in a small provincial government town who are expecting an inspector to arrive any day, a young man who is silly and broke, travelling back to his parents estate to ask for money.

He arrives in the town and is mistaken for the Government Inspector. The story unfolds from there, but it is brilliantly funny and clever.

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### Ali says

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### John says

A 3.5.

I wish Gogol had written more. After reading Dead Souls, his Collected Stories, and now these plays, there is not much else left to read. I have found his writing very witty and enjoyable. He is great at creating funny circumstances that seem like they could happen in real life. He is believable in his settings, which I think adds to the humor he pulls off. He also captures characters very well, even if they are often a little typecast.

I am very curious about what Gogol would have written had he had more freedom. Writing in Russia when he did, there was a limit to what ideas he could express. He seemed to push those boundaries as it was, often subtly. But I would have loved to have known what he was capable of if he had not been restricted.

It is easy to compare him to Oscar Wilde, even though he wrote 50 years earlier. Both share a sharp pen and are able to give the reader much to think about between the lines.

**The Marriage** – Witty and imaginative. Ahead of its time in poking a stick at the institution of marriage.

**From a Madman's Diary** – I was sad to find out this translation shortened the work. I wanted more and I guess Gogol had more. I would think it a very hard monologue to perform, it would be hard to show the transformation the character takes so quickly.

**Inspector** – Hilarious! A story that seems to typify what I have read of Gogol. It is based on misunderstandings, both purposeful and accidental.

**Gamblers** – My favorite of the four. I can envision many of the lines being delivered in rapid-fire sequence. The plot and deceit is nicely wound up, even if it is a little predictable.

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### **Jim says**

Some really funny moments inside some pretty typical plays. I like his short fiction better, but these were still entertaining.

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### **DalalK. says**

The Government Inspector \*\*\*\*\*

Marriage \*\*\*\*\* (Favourites)

The Gamblers \*\*\*\*\* (Favourites)

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### **Mike Jensen says**

The comments apply only to THE GOVERNMENT INSPECTOR, or INSPECTOR, as it is called here, and not the other plays.

This is one of the great comedies in world literature, a protracted sitcom that reveals the follies of everyone involved. It is a sort of citywide THE MAN WHO CAME TO DINNER, that pays off without sentimentality but big belly laughs. The play is well served in this Eric Bentley translation.

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## John Jr. says

Eric Bentley points out in a preface that Russian has no articles (didn't know that—did you?). That matters more in the case of *Zhenitba*, where we don't know whether to call it, in English, *A Marriage*, *The Marriage*, or the term for the state of matrimonial whatchamacallit, *Marriage*. Bentley chose to add "the" to the title there, but for an unexplained reason he opted for no article in dealing with *Revizor*, Gogol's best-known play. Here called *Inspector*, it's usually titled *The Government Inspector*, less often *The Inspector General*, and was labeled *The Specter General* by Nabokov, who wished to underline his view of Gogol as a fantasist.

Nabokov has a point. It's more obvious in a work such as "The Nose," about how a man's nose leaves his face. But what looks in *Inspector* like a satire specific to Russian culture, namely its quick subservience to anything resembling authority, has a broader human truth to it: how easily, under certain conditions at least, we come to believe what we hope or fear to be the case. The story is simple in outline: the mayor of a small town learns of an impending visit by a government inspector, and when a stranger sets himself up in a hotel, everyone takes him to be the inspector attempting to work in secret.

To me it's easy to imagine transplanting the idea from its original soil. I'm considering borrowing it for something I'm working on, which will probably be set in present-day America and among scientists no less. My project explains why I read only *Inspector* so far and am saving the rest for another day.

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## Ba?ak Çolular says

Kitaptaki iki oyun da Gogol'un ne kadar usta bir yazar oldu?unu bir kez daha kan?tl?yor. K?vrak, nüktedan bir kalem, birden fazla alt metin içeren, okuyucuya ders veren olaylar Gogol'un uzmanl?k alan?. Mutlaka okunmal?.

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## Alp Turgut says

Gogol'un iki önemli oyununu okuyucuya sunan "**Marriage - The Gamblers / Evlenme - Kumarbazlar**", ünlü yazar?n oyun yazar? olarak da ne kadar yetenekli oldu?unu görme ?ans? buldu?umuz gerçekten de?erli bir toplama. ?ki oyununda birbirinden e?lenceli komedyalar oldu?u eserde özellikle evlenmek isteyen ama evlenme an? yakla??nca cayan bir adam?n hikayesini anlatan "**Evlenme**" oyunu oldukça komik olmakla beraber zekice i?lenmi? bir olay örgüsüne de sahip. ?kinci oyunda ise Gogol doland?r?lan bir kumarbaz? okuyucuya bulu?turarak ilginç, komik ve bir o kadar da ders verici bir komedyaya imza at?yor. Rahat ve ak?c? diliyle okumas? kolay bir kitap oldu?unu da belirtmek gerek.

03.05.2015  
?stanbul, Türkiye

Alp Turgut

<http://www.filmdoktoru.com/kitap-labo...>

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## Cemre says

Müfetti?ler, okurken çok e?lendi?im bir oyun olmu?tu. Bunun yaratt??? bir bekleniyle okumaya ba?lad?m bu iki oyunu. Evlenme?yi sevsem de Kumarbaz'? okumaktan pek keyif ald???m? söyleyemeyece?im.

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## Eric says

Three fine comedies by Gogol during his stint in St. Petersburg. Gogol had a particular sense to the rhythm and "dance" that theater could (and arguably should always) offer. His plots are fast paced, witty and chock full of odd and peculiar characters (the twin landowners in "The Inspector General" are great side characters). That play is probably the most realized of the trio, with not entirely much in way of narrative to drive it but the consistency of its two main characters drives both the humor and the point all the way to the end. There is also a bit of fun in "The Marriage" and "The Gamblers," both shorter works and with fewer characters to keep track of, but both fun in their own ways. The comedy of ranks which Gogol became obsessed with in his Petersburg stories is as full force in the former story, and the latter is a great con man "bait and switch" tale which has a few great twists to the very end. This is a nice edition of the three plays, which I struggled to find all together in one until I stumbled upon it.

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## Keith says

This is another of Eric Bentley's many collections of plays. For the most part, he produces very accessible versions of plays, and frequently the only good English version of some plays. Overall, this set is good. *The Inspector* is a must read.

*Gamblers* \*\*\* – This is an amusing play about the cheat of cheaters. It's not much to read (because reading about people playing cards is not that interesting), but in performance I'm sure it's very entertaining. (07/16)

*Inspector* \*\*\*\* – This volume includes Gogol's famous Inspector (Revizor) – AKA The Government Inspector, the General Inspector, The Inspector General, etc. Bentley's translation is good, but he admits to cutting out some characters with the goal of creating a performance version. You can see my full thoughts on *Inspector* here: <https://www.goodreads.com/review/show....> (07/15)

*From a Madman's Diary* \*\*\* – This book also includes the "play" *From a Madman's Diary*, which is actually a Gogol short story he (Bentley) made into a play. I think it is very odd to include this. Gogol wrote a number of plays. I'm not sure I understand the rationale of including this adaptation here. I've never read the short story, but the play is a quirky look into the mind of an insane man. Bentley says he didn't include everything from the short story. It seemed to me, it was too short. There needed to be more. The changes and movements are too rapid. The letters written by the dogs are hysterical. (07/15)

*Marriage* \*\*\* – Marriage is a true farce – a bunch of absurd characters bumping into each other in embarrassing ways. The main character, Podklyossin, is unable to make any decisions, he's set in his ways, and though he whines about wanting to get married he's unwilling or unable to do anything to make it happen. He eventually escape his impending nuptials (and sentencing by the priest) by jumping out the window. It's a rather comical, light-hearted affair. Bentley calls it a "masterpiece," but I wouldn't go that far. (07/15)

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### **Steven says**

I had read all of Gogol's fiction, except for his plays, which were hard to find. Recently, a wonderful edition of *The Inspector* was published by Theatre Communications Group and translated by none other than Pevear and Volokhonsky. I immediately bought and read it (as all of Gogol's works, it was wonderful). Gogol also wrote two other plays, though - *Marriage* and *The Gamblers* - which I just couldn't find in a properly translated English edition. Then I stumbled on this collection, published by Methuen Drama (never heard of it before, to be honest). Re-reading *The Government Inspector* in a different translation can never hurt (this is always the case for translated works, of course - the more translations you read, the better), while I finally got to read Gogol's other plays to complete my reading of his fiction.

This edition has a good introduction and is nicely printed (i.e., it has a good 'feel,' a nice textual layout, and is without errors). *Marriage* was had me laughing out loud in several instances - it's pure Gogol. *The Gamblers* was not quite as good, but it was still intriguing with its plot twist near the end (although, in all fairness, I saw it coming - and would expect most people to see it as well).

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### **Alan Booker says**

really top class!

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