Katherine D. Harris
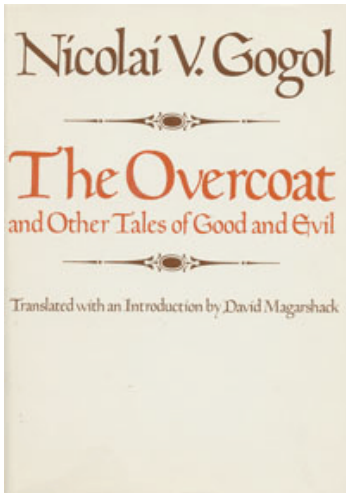**Intro to Lit Crit, Fall 2006**

Materials on Formalism & New Criticism

The Overcoat and Other Tales of Good and Evil
by Nicolai V. Gogol

Nicolai Gogol's short story "The Overcoat" had an immediate and profound effect on Russian literature when it was published in 1842. It has often been cited as the cornerstone of the Russian realistic school of fiction - as evidenced by Dostoyevsky's famous statement "We all come out from under Gogol's Overcoat."

In addition to "The Overcoat," this collection contains the story "The Nose," the hilarious and disturbing tale of a socially ambitious man who awakes one morning to find that his nose is missing. Franz Kafka is said to have drawn the inspiration for his Metamorphosis from this disconcerting tale.

"The overcoat belonged to Akaky Akayevitch, a poor government clerk whom it had cost a good part of his yearly salary and untold privations to buy. He had owned it but a day when it was stolen from him, and within a few days more he had died from exposure. His ghost haunted the neighborhood that had known him and stripped overcoats from the shoulders of passersby. But there is infinite pathos and richness of imagination in the telling." -Wilson's Fiction Catalog

"The subject of The Overcoat was suggested to Gogol at a tea party in Petersburg. The story made everybody laugh, everybody, that is, except Gogol. To the amazement of the whole company, Gogol lowered his head, looking sad and dejected; he felt pity for the poor civil servant. The plot of The Overcoat was already stirring in his mind.

"Gogol draws the character of the inoffensive civil servant, the hero of The Overcoat with a compassion, simplicity, gentle humour, and seeming casualness of style that makes it one of the greatest achievements of his genius. With this story Gogol began a new chapter in Russian literature in which the underdog and social misfit is treated not as a nuisance, or a figure of fun, or an object of charity, but as a human being who has as much right to happiness as anyone else."

-From the Introduction by David Magarshack

See article defining 'skaz"

<p align="center">**Ezra Loomis Pound (1885-1972)**
In a Station of the Metro</p>

    1 The apparition   of these faces   in the crowd :
    2 Petals   on a wet, black   bough .

Notes
1] the metro: the Paris subway system.
See Pound's commentary on this poem in his article "Vorticism," The Fortnightly Review 571 (Sept. 1, 1914): 465-67 (AP 4 F7 Robarts Library):

"Three years ago in Paris I got out of a "metro" train at La Concorde, and saw suddenly a beautiful face, and then another and another, and then a beautiful child's face, and then another beautiful woman, and I tried all that day to find words for what this had meant to me, and I could not find any words that seemed to me worthy, or as lovely as that sudden emotion. And that evening, as I went home along the Rue Raynouard, I was still trying, and I found, suddenly, the expression. I do not mean that I found words, but there came an equation ... not in speech, but in little spotches of colour. It was just that -- a "pattern," or hardly a pattern, if by "pattern" you mean something with a "repeat" in it. But it was a word, the beginning, for me, of a language in colour. I do not mean that I was unfamiliar with the kindergarten stories about colours being like tones in music. I think that sort of thing is nonsense. If you try to make notes permanently correspond with particular colours, it is like tying narrow meanings to symbols.

"That evening, in the Rue Raynouard, I realised quite vividly that if I were a painter, or if I had, often, that kind of emotion, or even if I had the energy to get paints and brushes and keep at it, I might found a new school of painting, of "non-representative" painting, a painting that would speak only by arrangements in colour.
....

"That is to say, my experience in Paris should have gone into paint ...

"The 'one image poem' is a form of super-position, that is to say it is one idea set on top of another. I found it useful in getting out of the impasse in which I had been left by my metro emotion. I wrote a thirty-line poem, and destroyed it because it was what we call work 'of second intensity.' Six months later I made a poem half that length; a year later I made the following hokku-like sentence: --

'The apparition of these faces in the crowd:
Petals, on a wet, black bough.'

"I dare say it is meaningless unless one has drifted into a certain vein of thought. In a poem of this sort one is trying to record the precise instant when a thing outward and objective transforms itself, or darts into a thing inward and subjective.

"This particular sort of consciousness has not been identified with impressionist art. I think it is worthy of attention."

See also a republication of this essay in Pound's *Gaudier-Brzeska: A Memoir* (1916; London: New Directions, 1960): 86-89). The lines have no spaced words in 1916.

Original text: Ezra Pound, "Contemporania," Poetry: A Magazine of Verse, 2.1 (April 1913): 6. Ezra Pound, Lustra (London: Elkin Mathews, 1916) 45 PS 3531 O82L8 1916 Robarts Library. See also Ezra Pound's Poetry and Prose: Contributions to Periodicals, prefaced and arranged by Lea Baechler, A. Walton Litz, and James Longenbach (New York and London: Garland, 1991), I (1902-1914): 137. PS 3531 O82A6 1991 Robarts Library.
First publication date: 1913
from: **http://rpo.library.utoronto.ca/poem/1657.html**