Scholars have long noted the importance of popular theater traditions, including Vertep, Commedia dell’Arte, and Petrushka, to Gogol’s work. As Mahdu Malik has shown, Gogol’s *Evenings* not only make use of Vertep archetypes, but use many of the devices of popular theater, including an exchange between “this-worldly” and “otherworldly” plots. Jan Kott and Martin Esslin have read Khlestakov of “The Government Inspector” as a Harlequin figure. In this presentation, I shall offer a reading of Petrushka, Chichikov’s lackey in *Dead Souls*, as the archetypal “Petrushka” figure from the Ukrainian Vertep and Russian Petrushka traditions. This reading helps to explain how Gogol constructed his novel, and helps to show the importance of this key character who hovers around the margins of the plot.

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