

**Title:** Pirozhki Papers: Narrative as Abjection in Nikolai Gogol's "Ivan Fyodorovich Shponka and his Aunt"

**Author:** Christina Schwartz, University of Chicago

This paper explores the role of abjection in Nikolai Gogol's *Evenings on a Farm Near Dikan'ka* as a new way to consider the narrator's relationship to the story he is telling. In *Powers of Horror*, Julia Kristeva explains that abjection is the recognition of distinction between the inside and outside, which allows for the possibility of defining self in opposition to everything else, me versus not me. Or in the case of this paper, the narrator versus the story he is telling. The abject threatens the subject, because once expelled it still remains part of the subject. This blurring of the distinction between subject and object threatens the breakdown of meaning with the interruption of the Real.

This paper argues that the narrator of Gogol's Dikan'ka tales, Rudy Pan'ko, consumes the tales of Ukrainian life, and subsequently re(presents) the stories, expelling them as the abject, something that the narrator both identifies with as well as from which he distances himself. In prefaces to Dikan'ka the narrator attempts to define himself in relation to his potential audiences, and his tales. He also explains the origin and his initial consumption of the tales. This paper ultimately focuses on the story "Ivan Fyodorovich Shponka and his Aunt," as an example of Pan'ko's act of recounting of a story as abjection. An abject reading of "Shponka" illuminates the strained position of the narrator both as critic and as storyteller, and the threat of the breakdown of meaning that the abjection of the narrative entails.

cschwartz@uchicago.edu