

Title: Gogol's *Petrushka*: *Dead Souls* and the *Vertep* Tradition
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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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