

Title: Collection and Recollection for a Void in *Dead Souls*
Author: Kiun Hwang, University of Pittsburgh

This paper aims to explore the rhetoric of space throughout Gogol's works, focusing on the analysis of Pliushkin's manor in *Dead Souls*. Specifically, I examine how this space acquires the potential to rehabilitate Gogol's ideal space, which can be viewed as the Ukrainian space in his early works. The potential of recovering harmony and open space grows from the semantic and thematic negative space of Russia that Gogol consistently characterized as a void.

First, I examine Pliushkin's garden as a dichotomy of the natural vs. the artificial, drawing on Gogol's descriptions of nature in opposition to cities and enclosed spaces in his earlier works and the 1842 revision of *Taras Bulba*; these descriptions imply that Pliushkin's garden has the potential to evolve into an ideal Russia. Second, I discuss Pliushkin's house and his collections in comparison to those in the Petersburg and the Mirgorod series. Several characters in Gogol's works are collectors who attempt to compensate for their losses. Pliushkin, the least successful collector of all, makes his place a bottomless pit. His space is usually interpreted as the void because of his enormous hodge-podge collections and the repeated appearance of a hole. However, when Chichikov breaches the boundary of his space, he introduces temporality into the enclosed space by recalling Pliushkin's childhood and family. This emotional release and conversation allow Pliushkin's useless collection, the watch, to gain meaning by becoming a future memory for both of them. Therefore, *Dead Souls*, and more specifically Pliushkin's manor, is one last hope for Gogol to make Russia into an ideal space in his early works. Gogol revives his nostalgia for Ukraine through a broader map, which can be viewed as a Russia with the potential to become an earthly paradise.