

Sologub's Literary Mothers: The Child-Mother Devotion in Fyodor Sologub's Short Stories

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Best known outside of Russia as the author of *The Petty Demon* (*Melkiy bes*, 1905), the Symbolist-writer Fyodor Sologub (1863-1927) also published a great number of short stories. In these stories, besides developing the main themes of his own literary production – which reflect his view of life (beauty, death, madness, children's innocence and purity, etc.) – , Sologub gives a special relevance to family relationships, in particular, the mother-child's one. In this paper, I will analyze the peculiar mother-child relationship that Sologub explores in his short stories.

Sologub's literary children, as the works by Stanley Rabinowitz show (“Fedor Sologub's Literary Children: The Special Case of *Melkii Bes*”; *Sologub's Literary Children: Keys To A Symbolist's Prose*), are always portrayed as innocent and sinless creatures, as it is in the tradition of Romanticism and Russian Symbolism; these children often become “victims of life” and of a cruel world. We could say the same thing about the literary mothers in Sologub's short stories. Sologub's literary mothers are usually introduced as idealized figures; they are not just earthly creatures, but almost celestial ones.¹

Sologub's maternal figures appear, in a way, as “victims of life” themselves: being either widows or not anymore loved by their husbands, they still preserve their youth and charm, even if they have to face life's challenges on their own. The only hope lighting up their dark existence is to be found in their children. Indee Sologub's literary mothers are completely devoted to their children, and strive to assure their happiness, education, and wellness.

In *Hide-and-Seek* (*Pryatki*, 1898) the maternal love of the 20 year-old Serafima

Aleksandrovna for her only daughter Lelechka becomes an exclusive relationship. Serafima Aleksandrovna got married at a not so young age, and is portrayed as a pretty, shy, and sensitive lady; she is thought to be an “ideal mother”: “The bride was nice – but not that much – she was a tall girl with dark eyes and dark hair, acting a bit shy but very tactfully”.² If Serafima Aleksandrovna is an “ideal mother”, Lelechka appears as an “ideal child”. In fact, to her mother, the little Lelechka embodies the very source of life’s beauty, joy, and value:

Lelechka is a charming child. No-one ever had and will ever have a child like her. Serafima Aleksandrovna, Lelechka’s mum, is sure of that. Lelechka has black big eyes, ruddy cheeks, and lips which seem created for kisses and laughs. . . . Lelechka is the only child of her mum. That’s why each Lelechka’s movement fascinates her mum. What a bliss: holding Lelechka on her knees, caressing her, feeling, under her hands, a lively little girl, as joyful as a little bird!³

Serafima Aleksandrovna’s relationship with her daughter grows into a “totalistic” feeling and takes the place of her attachment to her husband. Serafima Aleksandrovna married Sergey Modestovich Nesletev not for love, but for the sake of marriage, before getting too old for it. As time passes by, the two begin feeling and acting as two perfect strangers. Serafima Aleksandrovna feels more and more apart from her husband. In the woman’s mind, Sergey Modestovich is even associated to images recalling coldness and winter:

To tell the truth, Serafima Aleksandrovna is happy only in the child’s room. When she is with her husband she feels cold. Maybe, it’s because he himself loves coldness – cold water, cold air. He is always fresh and cold, with a cold smile, and wherever he goes, it’s like if cold gushes run through the air.⁴

Readers get the impression that it is the very Lelechka’s closeness that gives Serafima Aleksandrovna the desire to live and the strength to go on; thus, Lelechka represents for her mother much more than just her beloved little daughter: she symbolizes the beauty of life and love, the bright side of existence, whereas Sergey Modestovich stands for their opposites. Before Lelechka’s birth, when Serafima Aleksandrovna finds out that her husband is

having extramarital affairs, we would imagine an angry, impulsive, or even aggressive reaction from her part. However, what she does is even more surprising and “unnatural”: she does not get upset, to the point that she even forgets about it. Something more relevant is happening inside her: Serafima Aleksandrovna “is pregnant: now an exciting feeling consumes her”.⁵ The child she is about to give birth to, to the betrayed and lonely mother, becomes the personification of the highest value in a woman’s life – the maternal love.

Since the very beginning, Serafima Aleksandrovna tries to involve her husband in Lelechka’s growth and education. However, she soon realizes that Sergey Modestovich is as much interested in Lelechka as he is in his wife. Therefore, Serafima Aleksandrovna starts raising her daughter on her own, devoting all her time, energy, efforts, and love to Lelechka. Distancing herself more and more from her husband, Serafima Aleksandrovna “projectes” on Lelechka all her affective needs. The relationship between the mother and her child is here “eroticized”. In the mother’s mind, the devotion to her child takes the place of any other feelings or love impulses, by turning finally into a real “obsession”: “She loved her child with an unsatisfied passion, in the same way the other women betrayed their husbands with occasional young men”.⁶ Serafima Aleksandrovna spends her days in Lelechka’s room, playing hide-and-seek with her, her favourite game. However, the family cook Agafya prevents her from playing that way: she says that hiding oneself is a forewarning sign of death (“ – She hides herself and she will hide forever – said Agafya with a misterious whisper, looking anxiously at the door”).⁷

Lelechka’s mother does not believe in such superstitions, which she thinks are invented by humble people; nonetheless, loving Lelechka with all her soul, she is worried about her daughter’s life.

“What an absurdity! Is it possible for Lelechka to die?” thought Serafima Aleksandrovna, while trying to win through rational reasoning the feeling of coldness and terror she experienced when thinking of Lelechka’s possible death. Serafima

Aleksandrovna thought that those women were ignorant, and therefore they believed in superstitions. She clearly understood that between a child's entertainment, which every child would like, and the continuity of his/her life, there could be no links. That evening she accurately tried to occupy herself with something else – but her thoughts involuntary went back to the fact that Lelechka loved hiding herself.⁸

Serafima Aleksandrovna plans about not playing that game with Lelechka anymore; the little girl, however, is so fond of it, that her mother cannot do that to her. From that moment on, Lelechka's mother would, in a way, realize that she has no power on her daughter's destiny. The very hide-and-seek game seems to show her how Lelechka is not tied up to "this world", and is therefore doomed to death:

"Why Lelechka remembers all the time of 'bo-peep'? She is not tired of closing her eyes and covering her face all the time? Maybe – thought Serafima Aleksandrovna – Lelechka has not that strong tie to the world as other children have, when they look at things. But, if it is so, is that the sign of an organic weakness? Isn't that the seed of an unconscious unwilling of living?"⁹

However, the mother herself cannot leave her own wish to play this game with Lelechka that. On one side, Serafima Aleksandrovna has to admit her own impotence in preserving her daughter's life.¹⁰ On the other, though, Serafima Aleksandrovna seems challenging life and destiny; she is playing with death, but the winner will not be her, but the death itself.¹¹

No longer thereafter, Lelechka falls suddenly ill and, after three days, she dies. With Lelechka's death Serafima herself "dies", losing every vitality and appearance of life:

In a dull desperation, Serafima Aleksandrovna left Lelechka and went out of the room. She met her husband.– Lelechka is dead – said she with a calm, soundless voice. Sergey Modestovich looked anxiously at her pale face. He was struck by the strange dullness in the features of that face, that, shortly before, was full of life and beauty.¹²

The mother-child relationship establishes between the two a perfect "assimilation" of feelings, like a "symbiosis" that sticks them together, both in life and death. Thus, death "grasps" Serafima Aleksandrovna's beautiful face, making her more and more looking as a

dead woman; in the same way, the mother keeps on thinking that her little Lelechka is still alive in her grave:¹³ destiny, would it be of life or death, is for them the same.

The story ends with Lelechka's funeral, where Serafima Aleksandrovna appears as having completely lost the sense of reality because of her grief: Serafima Aleksandrovna cannot tear herself away from the dead Lelechka; Lelechka's grave must thus be taken away from her, as from a mad woman.

As Serafima Aleksandrovna experiences her own child's death, in other short stories children suffer for their mother's loss, which leaves them with an irreparable sense of void and solitude. In these stories, such as in *Hide-and-Seek*, the mother-child devotion seems to go beyond death; everything can happen in Sologub's short stories, but still mother and child are tied up together in the same destiny.

Both in *Beauty* (*Krasota*, 1899) and *The Earthly to Earth* (*Zemle zemnoe*, 1898) the protagonists, Elena and Sasha, are terribly suffering for having lost their mothers, who, nonetheless, are still alive in their heart and memory.

The short story *Beauty* begins with a scene where the protagonist, Elena, in the silence of her room, weeps for her dead mother. She had just been buried that day. From the very beginning of the story the reader realizes how Elena's devotion to her mother is deep and authentic.

Elena's dead mother is described, again, as an "idealized mother". When she died, she was not so old, and she was still beautiful like a goddess, although her white hair and pale face let show her closeness to death:

She was beautiful, like a goddess of the ancient world. Slow and majestic were all her movements. Her face was like blown of sad thoughts about something that was lost forever or something desired but unattainable. Since a long time ago, on it laid a dark paleness, herald of death. It looked like if a great tiredness bent that beautiful body to give it a rest. Her dark hair had started turning white, and at that time it was strange for Elena to think that her mother would soon become old...¹⁴

To Elena, her mother's death symbolizes the end of her previous life, as full as it was

of love and happiness.¹⁵ To her eyes, her mother was the only link to the world: shy and discreet, the young woman lives apart from the world, having lost the only person who was worth loving, being the very source of every beauty and pureness in life: her mother.¹⁶

Beauty – true, pure beauty, the physical and the moral one, which Elena’s mother is a symbol of – becomes for Elena an ideal of life, as well as a real obsession. Every evening, after having locked the door of her room, Elena usually contemplates with a great pleasure and narcissistic attitude her beautiful naked body reflected in the mirror.¹⁷ However, one evening Elena forgets locking her door and, being naked in front of the mirror, is surprised by the servant Makrina, who suddenly enters the room. Elena feels ashamed to the point she becomes sure that her unsullied beauty has been forever corrupted and dishonored;¹⁸ this shame would have for her a fatal consequence. Indeed, from that moment on, Elena, on one side, doesn’t give up the every-evening contemplation of her naked body in the mirror; on the other side, by doing that, she doesn’t feel joy anymore, until she even thinks she is not beautiful anymore and people would make fun of her.¹⁹ Elena begins thinking that men are not able to understand and appreciate beauty when they see it; on the contrary, they can only spoil it. In such a world, how can Elena, a follower of pure beauty, live?²⁰

The story ends with Elena killing herself with a dagger, thus purifying the whole world from ugliness and evil through her sacrifice. Death, which, at the beginning of the story, seemed to have separated forever the young woman from her mother, draws them together again, thanks to Elena’s suicide. In fact, Sologub doesn’t conceive death in a negative way. To him, death is the “great Liberator” from the troubles of human existence (Ivanov-Razumnik 18), and, moreover, is what preserves the mother-child symbiosis, which lasts even after death.

Another example of this is in the short story *The Earthly to Earth*. The protagonist,

Sasha Korablyov, is a young boy whose mother died when he was too little to even remember her. Sasha lives with his father, a good but stern man who can't give him the maternal love he needs. Sasha has a peaceful, in a way perfect life; however, he is not happy: "In his life it was all good – the sun made him happy, nature attracted him – but Sasha was more and more often unsatisfied of himself. He didn't know and couldn't understand why, and was more and more consumed by that".²¹

Sasha lacks the main element for a child's happiness: his mother.²² Thus, the mother-child devotion appears to be, in Sologub's conception, a unique and exclusive relationship, which cannot be replaced by any other else. The young boy misses his dead mother so much that he even dreams she would come out of her grave and appear to him as a ghost; he even goes to the cemetery in the night to see her, but nothing happens and Sasha understands he will never see his mother again, at least in this life: "Sasha got sad, because the dead don't stand up and appear. If only her dear mum would come! But she didn't – the separation was forever. It was useless to wait for and pray".²³

That's why Sasha feels more and more fascinated by death. At the end of the story, he is about to drown himself, but he is saved by the servant Lepetin'ya, who was worried about him, having observed – like Sasha's father had – the boy's attraction for the afterlife.²⁴ Sologub's devotion-relationship between a mother and her child seems to go beyond illness (*Hide-and-Seek*), death (*Hide-and-Seek*, *Beauty*, *The Earthly to Earth*), and even madness. This is what happens to the mother-figure of *Shadows* (*Teni*, 1894) and to her little boy Volodya. Volodya Lovlyov is a 12-year-old boy who lives with his mother, the beautiful, clever, and sensitive Evgenya Stepanovna, who has been a widow for nine years. The closeness between Volodya and his mother is even suggested by their physical similarity:

“She came closer to him, smiling sweetly. She was so similar to him, with his same large eyes on her pale, beautiful face”.²⁵

Evgenya Stepanovna is fully devoted to her only child, helping him with his homework, giving him all her attention and love.

When Volodya finds a small illustrated book containing a page with some drawings explaining how to form shadows on the wall with one’s hands, the finding marks the beginning of a new game for Volodya, who starts forgetting about school, food and sleep, and spends all his time in his room playing with shadows. Having caught him playing the shadows game for the third time, after she had told him many times to stop, Evgenya Stepanovna confiscates the shadow-book from him and even takes him to the doctor. The story reaches its climax when Volodya receives a bad grade at school, being absorbed by the contemplation of shadows on the auditorium’s walls. Volodya is completely “ill” from shadows: they appear to him everywhere and have also replaced the real world: “Volodya didn’t observe things anymore, he didn’t even see them – now he used to focus his full attention on their shadows. . . . Shadows were everywhere, all around him . . . and they clasped Volodya, crossing one another and enveloping him in a thick net”.²⁶

At the end, Volodya and his mother come to a compromise: they would play together with shadows every evening, before doing homework. In fact, mother and child get to the point of creating a parallel world; by doing so, they both fall into madness, having chosen the way of total alienation from world and reality.

In conclusion, the mother-son devotion can be inscribed in the very heart of Sologub’s

inspiration. The mother-child devotion, as the examined short stories show, must necessarily be related to Sologub's artistic and philosophical vision.

In his article *Irony and Lyrics* (*Ironya i lirika*, 1908) and in his novel *The Created Legend* (*Tvorimaya legenda*, 1905-1913), Sologub distinguishes between two different and even opposite "truths" or ways of conceiving the world: on one side, there is "irony", which is the uncritical acceptance and approval of present reality, symbolized by the rude Don Quixote's Aldonza or the "earthly" Eva; on the other side, there is "lyrics", that is, the refusal and negation of the present world, which tries to create a new reality, and is represented by some associations: the sweet Dulcinea, Adam's first wife Lilith, dream, fantasy and transcendence. Thus, in Sologub's conception, the strong affective bond between a mother and her child symbolizes the world of dream, fantasy, ideal, transcendence, and truth, embodied by the Don Quixote's Dulcinea ("lyrics"). Such a bond can be temporarily damaged, but never completely destroyed by the real world, the realm of "irony". Although mothers and their children in Sologub's short stories die or become insane, their maternal-filial affinity never fades. Like in dreams and in the Art world, ideals can become possible, even the impossible ones.

NOTES

¹ Indeed, critics have noticed how Sologub's mother figures are drawn from the Romantic worship of women and love itself (see, for example, Chukovsky).

² "Невеста была красива, не слишком, впрочем, – высокая, черноглазая, черноволосая девица, державшаяся несколько застенчиво, но с большим тактом" (Sologub 439). All translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated.

³ "Лелечка – прелестный ребенок. Ни у кого нет другого такого ребенка, и никогда не было, и не может быть. Серафима Александровна, Лелечкина мама, уверена в этом. Глаза у Лелечки черные, большие, щеки румяные, губы созданы для поцелуев и для смеха. . . . Лелечка у мамы одна. Поэтому-то каждое Лелечкино движение чарует маму. Что за блаженство, – держать Лелечку у себя на коленях, ласкать ее, чувствовать под руками маленькую девочку, бойкую и веселую, как птичка!" (438).

⁴ “Сказать по правде, только в детской и весело Серафиме Александровне. С мужем ей холодно. Может быть, это потому, что он и сам любит холод, – холодную воду, холодный воздух. Он – всегда свежий и холодный, с холодной улыбкою, – и где он проходит, там словно пробегают в воздухе холодные струйки” (438).

⁵ “. . . она ждала ребенка с тревожным, поглощающим ее чувством” (439).

⁶ “Она любила девочку с неудовлетворенною страстностью, как другие женщины, ошибочно устроившие свою судьбу, изменяют мужьям для случайных молодых людей” (439).

⁷ “– Прячется, прячется, да и спрячется, – таинственным шепотом сказала Агафья, опасливо поглядывая на дверь” (442).

⁸ “‘Что за вздор! разве Лелечка может умереть’, – думала Серафима Александровна, стараясь разумными рассуждениями победить ощущение холода и ужаса, охватившее ее при мысли о возможной Лелечиной смерти. Серафима Александровна думала, что эти женщины невежественны и потому верят приметам. Она же ясно понимала, что между детскою забавою, которую может полюбить всякий ребенок, и продолжительностью его жизни не может быть никакого соответствия. Она с особенным старанием старалась в этот вечер заняться чем-нибудь посторонним, – но мысли ее невольно обращались к тому, что Лелечка любит прятаться” (444).

⁹ “‘Отчего Лелечка все вспоминает свое ‘тютю’? Как это ей не надоест одно и то же, – закрывать глаза и прятать лицо? Может быть, – думала Серафима Александровна, – у Лелечки нет такого сильного влечения к миру, как у других детей, которые неотступно глядят на вещи. Но если так, то не признак ли это органической слабости? Не зародыш ли это бессознательной неохоты жить?’” (445).

¹⁰ She knows that she cannot preserve Lelechka from her mortal destiny: “‘I’m her mother, will I not be able to protect her?’ – thought she, imagining the various dangers that could threaten Lelechka” (“‘Я – мать: неужели я не уберегу?’ – думала она, воображая разные напасти, которые могут угрожать Лелечке”) (446).

¹¹ “Serafima Aleksandrovna was consumed by premonitions. Stopping the game of hide-and-seek with Lelechka made her feel ashamed in front of Fedosya and herself. However, that game was becoming troublesome; and even more troublesome because she would have liked to play it, although, to hide herself from Lelechka and to search for Lelechka. Serafima Aleksandrovna sometimes was even starting playing that game, with an inner feeling that she was doing something bad, something she knew she was not allowed to do.” (“Предчувствия томили Серафиму Александровну. Ей стыдно было, перед Федосьею и перед собою, бросить игру в прятки с Лелечкою. Но эта игра становилась для нее мучительною; тем более мучительною, что все-таки хотелось поиграть ею, и все более тянуло прятаться от Лелечки или отыскивать спрятавшуюся Лелечку. Серафима Александровна даже сама иногда затевала эту игру, – с тяжелым сердцем, страдая, как от какого-нибудь дурного дела, о котором знаешь, что не надо его делать, и все же делаешь”) (445).

¹² “В тупом отчаянии Серафима Александровна оставила Лелечку и вышла из комнаты. Она встретила мужа. – Лелечка умерла, – сказала она тихо, почти беззвучным голосом. Сергей Модестович опасливо посмотрел на ее бледное лицо. Его поразило странное отупение в чертах этого, прежде оживленного, красивого лица” (447).

¹³ “They dressed up Lelechka, put her into the grave and took her into the room. Serafima Aleksandrovna was standing near the grave, dully looking at her dead daughter. Sergey Modestovich went close to her, tried to comfort her with void, cold words, and to take her away from the grave. Serafima Aleksandrovna smiled. – Go away – she said in a soft voice. – Lelechka is playing. She will now get up” (“Лелечку одели, положили в маленький гроб и вынесли в залу. Серафима Александровна стояла у гроба и тупо смотрела на мертвую дочку. Сергей Модестович подошел к жене и, утешая ее пустыми, холодными словами, старался отвести ее от гроба. Серафима Александровна улыбалась. – Отойди, – сказала она тихо. – Лелечка играет. Она сейчас встанет”) (447-448).

¹⁴ “Она была прекрасна, как богиня древнего мира. Медленны и величавы были все ее движения. Ее лицо было как бы обвешено грустными мечтами о чем-то, навеки утраченном, или о чем-то желанном и недостижимом. Уже на нем давно, предвещательница смерти, лежала томная бледность. Казалось, что великая усталость клонила к успокоению это прекрасное тело. Белые волосы между черными все заметнее становились на ее голове, – и странно было Елене думать, что ее мать скоро будет старухою...” (499-500).

¹⁵ “Elena remembered her dead mother – and she knew that her previous life, peaceful, bright and severe, was dead forever” (“Елена вспоминала покойную мать, – и знала, что прежняя жизнь, мирная, ясная и строгая, умерла навсегда”) (499).

¹⁶ “Elena was shy with people and couldn’t love anyone she met. There was just one person worth of love – her mother, because she was calm, beautiful and true. Elena wished that all people were like her mother, that they would understand that there was one goal in life – beauty, and would build for themselves a worthy and wise life...” (“Елена была сдержанна с людьми и не могла полюбить ни одного из тех, кого встречала. Одна только была, которая стоила любви, мать, – потому что она была спокойная, прекрасная и правдивая. Елена хотела бы, чтобы и все люди стали когда-нибудь такими же, чтобы они поняли, что одна есть цель в жизни, – красота, и устроили себе жизнь достойную и мудрую...”) (501).

¹⁷ “She moved around the room, naked, and stayed still, and lay down, and all her positions, and all her slow movements were beautiful. And she was happy of her beauty, and spent those naked and long hours – now dreaming and contemplating herself, now reading again and again the pages of beautiful and severe poets...” (“Она двигалась по комнате, нагая, и стояла, и лежала, и все ее положения, и все медленные движения ее были прекрасны. И она радовалась своей красоте, и проводила, обнаженная, долгие часы, – то мечтая и любуясь собою, то прочитывая страницы прекрасных и строгих поэтов...”) (502).

¹⁸ “She felt shame in all her body – it was spreading like fire, like an illness it was eating her body” (“Она чувствовала стыд во всем теле, – он разливался пламенем, как снедающая тело болезнь”) (504).

¹⁹ “Her own body seemed now to Elena not so beautiful as before. She found in that body many faults – she looked for them with diligence. She imagined that it was hiding something repugnant – something evil, which would eat and dishonor beauty, a disgusting spiderweb or mucus which couldn’t be wiped out in any way” (“Уже и не таким, как прежде, прекрасным казалось теперь Елене ее тело. Она в этом теле находила недостатки, – старательно отыскивала их. Чудилось в нем нечто отвратительное, – зло, разъедающее и позорящее красоту, как бы налет какой-то, паутина или слизь, которая противна и которую никак не стряхнуть”) (505).

²⁰ “– They don’t even love themselves – said Elena in a cold voice, – and that’s not just coincidence. They don’t understand what is the only thing worth of love – beauty. They have so vile thoughts about beauty that I’m getting ashamed of being born on this earth. I don’t want to live here” (“– Они сами себя не любят, – холодно говорила Елена, – да и не за что. Они не понимают того, что одно достойно любви, – не понимают красоты. О красоте у них пошлые мысли, такие пошлые, что становится стыдно, что родилась на этой земле. Не хочется жить здесь”) (507).

²¹ “В жизни все было хорошо, – и солнце радовало, и зелень манила, – а собою Саша все чаще бывал недоволен. Почему, – он не знал, не мог понять и все чаще томился” (460).

²² “There wasn’t only what was dear to Sasha’s heart – there wasn’t Sasha’s young and cheerful mummy, who had forever left this sunny, bright, outside world” (“Не было только того, что мило и дорого Сашину сердцу, – не было Сашиной мамочки, молодой, веселой, но навсегда оставившей этот солнечный, яркий, внешний мир”) (468).

²³ “Саше стало грустно, что мертвые не встают и не являются. Если бы милая мама пришла! Но нет, – разлука навеки. Напрасно ждать и молиться” (468).

²⁴ Sasha’s father brings together, in his thoughts, the wife’s death to that of the son: “A healthy and cheerful young boy, Sasha sometimes seemed to be destined to a brief life – not an inhabitant of a bright world, as people said. Something obscure and eternally not-joyful in Sasha’s eyes sometimes passed through his father’s sad thoughts. And when he sadly looked far away, his mind sometimes created, next to the wife’s grave, his son’s grave.” (“Здоровый и веселый мальчик, Саша иногда казался недолговечным, – не жилец на белом свете, как говорят в народе. Что-то темное и вечно нерадостное в Сашиных глазах наводило иногда отца на грустные мысли. И когда он смотрел печально вдаль, перед ним возникала иногда в воображении рядом с жениною могилой другая, свежая насыпь”) (461).

²⁵ “Она подходила к нему, ласково улыбаясь, такая похожая на него, с такими же широкими глазами на бледном, прекрасном лице” (362).

²⁶ “Володе уже незанимательны стали предметы, он их почти и не видел, – все его внимание уходило на их тени. . . . Тени везде вокруг . . . – все они теснились к Володе, скрещивались, обволакивали его неразрывную сетью” (377).

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