

Title: Spit Wads and Spiteful Words in Sologub's *The Petty Demon*

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In her study of ritual in *The Petty Demon*, L.V. Evdokimova identifies a score of telling correspondences with Russian folklore in Sologub's work. However, she magnanimously passes over one seemingly peripheral scene in which Peredonov spits directly into the face of his mistress, Varvara. This is a gesture ripe with meaning. While the passage speaks to the reader on several different levels, Peredonov's behavior is best interpreted in the context of superstition since this act echoes folk traditions of defense against sorcery. As Popov notes: "Pri spore ili ssore s koldunom sleduet pliunut' emu v litso i smotret' v glaza: togda on na vremya lishaetsya svoei sily." (Korshunkov, 115).

It is surprising that this theme emerges in a concealed form so early in the novel – well before the theme of countercharms is raised explicitly. The very subject of spitting opens up its own area for discussion since it is one of the most enduring pastimes of the novel's protagonist, whose favorite refrain is: "Mne naplevat' ." Notably, the scene with Varvara is the very first instance in the text when the act of spitting is aligned with the notion of self-protection. The paper will focus on how this deceptively simple domestic squabble stands out as an exemplary scene whose motif plays a major role in the vast system of thematic reflections and refractions scattered throughout the novel.

Evdokimova, L. V. *Mifopoeticheskaya traditsia v tvorchestve F. Sologuba*. Astrakhan: Izdatel'stvo Astrakhanskogo pedagogicheskogo universiteta, 1998.

Korshunkov, V.A. "Za znakomoi strokoi. Koldovskie glaza i mal'chiki v glazakh." *Russkaya Rech': Nauchno-Pouliarnyi Zhurnal*. No. 3 (May-June, 2000): 112-121.