

Title: On the unity of Mikhail Kuzmin's poetry

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This paper seeks to identify the unifying principles of the poetic oeuvre of Mikhail Kuzmin (1872-1936), and also to probe the very concept of unity which, I argue, emerges from his poetry. Kuzmin's poetry displays great variety of style and content. In 1924 Georgii Adamovich noted, "Kuzmin has no unifying theme. His books are merely collections of various poems that are not unified in any way. There is no poet here." In this paper I shall investigate the different kinds of unity within Kuzmin's poetry and the unity of his oeuvre taken as a whole.

In fact, unity is the basic concept on which Kuzmin's poetry is built. The principle of unity permeates Kuzmin's entire poetic oeuvre, manifesting itself on every structural level. Typically, Kuzmin's individual collection of poems tells a coherent story which is reinforced by its intricate poetic structure. Kuzmin's poetry forms a single whole due to its overall compositional structure which, despite all of its flexibility and dynamism, displays a harmonious, precise, and consummate form.

The concept of unity is discussed explicitly and extensively throughout Kuzmin's poetry, and is developed in connection with such related concepts as fullness, completeness, and wholeness, as well as their opposites such as fragmentation and division, lack and incompleteness. Moreover, all of Kuzmin's collections, taken as a single whole, form a unified discourse on the theme of love, which Kuzmin sees as the greatest unifying force.

Following Vladimir Markov, I argue that Kuzmin's concept of unity closely associates him with other major poets of the Silver Age. For instance, Valerii Briusov tried to achieve "a certain unity both in terms of its content as well as in terms of its structural design." Blok similarly spoke of the need for the work of a poet to be united by the "sense of a path." The integrity of Kuzmin's poetic path explains why Gumilev recognized Kuzmin as one of the best contemporary Russian poets for his extraordinary gift to achieve the "exquisite harmony of the whole together with the free diversity of particulars."