

Title: The Problem of Documentary Identification of Western Sources of Mikhail Kuzmin's Prose ('Feats of Alexander the Great' and 'The Miraculous Life of Joseph Balsamo, Count Cagliostro')

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It is taken for granted that M. Kuzmin, like many of his non-realistic contemporaries, often used rare literary sources in his creative process. We can now observe two methods of determining the exact sources of his writings used in scholarly works about Kuzmin. The first method is comparative, based merely on textual details and poetic devices. Scholars who use it speak about what Kuzmin could have read and not about what he had actually read and incorporated into his texts. The second is a documentary one based on reference to Kuzmin's diary, notebooks and letters. Integral to the operation of this second method is the process of verifying information provided by the author himself by consulting possible sources of his inspiration.

The recent publications 'Kuzmin's 'Comedies about Saints': Sources of the Text' and 'Bibliographical Sources in Kuzmin's Notebooks' demonstrate obvious academic preference for the second method. The newly published bibliographical list of identified potential sources opens the way for continuation of the study of Kuzmin's multi-sourced novels about Alexander the Great and Count Cagliostro.

The first part of my paper is devoted to Kuzmin's manuscript notes made during his work on these novels. His notes on 'The Miraculous Life' in the possession of the Russian National Library are described as a "plan" of this novel. But in fact they don't constitute a plan but rather a rapidly written and emotionally colored summary of an unidentified French book about Cagliostro. Kuzmin's preparatory notes for 'Feats of Alexander the Great' from his notebook held at Puskinskii Dom comprise a large manuscript still unknown to scholars. My analysis is focused on Kuzmin's list of those who wrote about Alexander the Great over the course of the preceding centuries and on his summary of events which later developed into the novel.

The second part of my paper depends on research to be conducted in the USA. I shall verify Kuzmin's potential sources mentioned by him in his notes and compare their contents with his preparatory notes for both novels. If successful in doing so, I shall speak about Kuzmin's principles for the transformation of source texts into his own artistic writings. If not, then I shall speak about correlations between the notes and the final versions of Kuzmin's novels.