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Techniques of the Commedia Dell'arte in the Poetics of Plays of M.A. Kuzmin

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The paper explores techniques of the commedia dell'arte, used in the dramatic works of M.A. Kuzmin. We give a particularly detailed study of two major pieces – “The Venetian Madcaps” and “Mary’s Tuesday” and the reason for the application of these techniques. Techniques of dell’arte allowed deliberate use of typification, suitable to depict common human situations.

Keywords: commedia dell’arte, pastiche, masks, play.

1. Introduction

Mikhail Alekseevich Kuzmin (1872-1936) looks odd in the literature of Russian “Silver Age”. In late 1900, he formally belonged to the symbolism, and in 1916, literary critic V. Zhirmunskii argued that Kuzmin “is linked to the symbolism by the mystical nature of his experiences, but he does not bring these experiences into his poetry” (Zhirmunskii V.M., p. 107). With this definition it is not clear why Kuzmin should be considered symbolist poet. And since he anticipated neoclassical findings of acmeism, then he is often seen as among acmeists, despite his statements that acmeism is “stupid and ridiculous...” (Kuzmin M.A. (1922), p. 100), that acmeism is “made-up and violent school...” (Kuzmin M.A. (1923), p. 116). In 1909, Kuzmin wrote: “... let the world discernment be mystical, realistic, skeptical or even idealistic <...> let creativity techniques be impressionistic, realistic, naturalistic; content – be lyrical or consistent

with the storyline <...> but, please, be logical, <...> in the plot, in the process of creation, in the syntax. <...> be <...> accurate and authentic – and you will find the secret of the marvelous thing – beautiful clarity – which I would call ‘clarism’” (Kuzmin M.A. (1910), p. 6).

Almost all researchers first of all note the pastiche skills of Kuzmin, his ability to feel the spirit and style of different cultures. However, pastiche was not an end in itself for Kuzmin. Having very personal attitude to tradition he claimed: “Pastiche is the transfer of the plot in a certain period and its realization in *the specific literary form of the exact time*” (Kuzmin M.A. (1910), p. 9).

2. Analysis

Kuzmin as a creator first came into contact with commedia dell’arte by writing at the request of V.E. Meierkhold music for the production of A.A. Block’s “Balaganchik”; in a letter dated

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