

Title: "We Are Hellenes": Syncretism and Aesthetics in Kuzmin's *Wings*  
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Abstract:

This paper provides a reappraisal of Mikhail Kuzmin's *Wings* (Kryl'ia, 1906) not only as Russia's first gay Bildungsroman, but also as a text that valorizes language study and reading widely in languages other than one's own, particularly Greek. Drawing on Kuzmin's poetry, diaries, and correspondence as well as his novel, I show that in his case, the subjective elements of language learning are inextricably bound to the expression of sexual identity, which is in turn bound to aesthetic experience. I focus primarily on *Wings*' Hellenic monologue and the Alexandrian Songs cycle (Aleksandriiskie pesni, 1904-1908) to argue for a vision of aesthetic syncretism rooted in classical themes that Kuzmin holds to be a necessary prerequisite for opening oneself to possibilities in life and love beyond social prescriptions.