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Abstract

Gavrila Derzhavin's Praise to the Mosquito

One of the less known works in Derzhavin's literary heritage, the *Praise to the Mosquito*, written in 1807 and published only after the death of its author, deserves our attention as an example of a brilliant mock ode with didactic intentions. Conceived while retired in his country estate at Zvanka, during a particularly hot summer, the 21 stanza poem – here translated for the first time into Italian – was thematically echoed in the work of Pushkin and Tiutchev. The modest insect is celebrated recurring to a high genre and a dense linguistic texture, in which classic and biblical reminiscences are interwoven with folklore images and motifs, while the noise of the mosquito is reproduced with buzzing consonants. The panegyric to the *komar* is also an occasion to touch serious issues (tyranny and the bloody conquerors, social inequality and the function of poetry). Moreover, this work of the late Derzhavin shows curious textual affinities with the *Treatise on Mosquitos* inserted by the thinker and writer Vasili Malinovskii (the first Director of the Tsarskoe selo Lycee) in his travelogue *Rossiiainin v Anglii* (published in 1796).

Keywords: Gavrila Derzhavin, early Nineteenth century poetry, ode, parody, Vasili Malinovskii.