

Title: Between Memory and Oblivion: Vladislav Ozerov as a Historical Reference

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Following the resounding success of his tragedies in the first decade of Alexander I's reign, Vladislav Ozerov withdrew from the cultural scene in 1809 and died in 1816. An intense polemic about his literary merit involved such towering figures as Derzhavin and Pushkin, whose opinions gradually overshadowed the author himself. Recent scholarly inquiries into Ozerov's literary reputation (Ivanov; Veselova) reveal that in the second half of the nineteenth century the playwright was largely reduced to a question of critical taxonomy, a retrospective disentangling of classicism, sentimentalism, and romanticism.

At the same time, Ozerov remained part of the Alexandrine legend, and of the cultural present, as a creator, not so much of literary texts but rather of landmark roles for nationally celebrated actors. The continuity of the live performative tradition and theatrical lore sustained the memory of stage triumphs enabled by Ozerov's tragic verse. Neither an utterly obsolete name nor a persevering influence, "Ozerov" acquired the properties of a sign indicating its own absence. In addition, the mythological and historical subjects of Ozerov's tragedies entered into an ambivalent relationship with the perception of his own historical time. Arguably, it is this context that prepared two remarkable uses of "Ozerov" as a historical reference: by Aleksandr Ostrovskii in his comedy *Na vsiakogo mudretsa dovol'no prostoty* (*Even a Wise Man Stumbles*, 1868), which inscribed the "Alexandrine man" and his tragic theatre into a satirical representation of the post-reform Russian society; and by the director Fedor Komissarzhevskii in his revival of *Dmitrii Donskoi* in 1914. The two theatrical texts developed Ozerov's mediated, vicarious presence in cultural memory into a paradoxical emblem or figure of both persistence and transience, historical continuity and oblivion.

#### Bibliography

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