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Cursing at the Whirlwind: The Old Testament Landscape of *The Bronze Horseman*

Kathleen Scollins

Just over a century ago, Valery Briusov identified three emerging trends in the scholarly response to Pushkin's *The Bronze Horseman*, corresponding roughly to the poem's three dominant ideological planes: the social, the political, and the religious.[1] As David Bethea observes, the poem's religious angle received scant critical consideration in the subsequent decades, particularly post-1917; the past several years, however, have restored some balance to the critical reception, as a new generation of scholars has begun to address the poem's rich metaphysical contexts. In 1990, Igor Nemirovsky argued that the basic organization of *The Bronze Horseman* around sacred events and themes (the creation of the world; the Lord's wrath; punishment by flood) reveals the Bible as a major creative framework upon which Pushkin modeled the world of his Petersburg tale.[2] Certainly, as more than one Pushkin scholar has observed, the Prologue to *The Bronze Horseman* stages a cosmogonic drama, featuring Peter the Great as the city's mythic Creator, coaxing worlds out of words and wringing cosmos from a boggy chaos.[3] Numerous critics have cast the passage as an overtly biblical drama, starring Peter as more than just any old demiurge: urban theorist Marshall Berman calls the Prologue "a kind of Pe-

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[1] For a summary of Briusov's argument, see David M. Bethea, "The Role of the Eques in Puškin's *Bronze Horseman*," in *Puškin Today*, ed. David Bethea (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 99; for more on the interpretive possibilities and tensions within the poem, see Andrew Kahn, *Pushkin's The Bronze Horseman* (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1998), 9–14.

[2] I. V. Nemirovskii, "Bibleiskaia tema v 'Mednom vsadnike,'" *Russkaia literatura* 3 (1990): 3. For more on the poem's sacred sources, see Bethea, "The Role of the Eques," 99, 227 n. 2; and Gary Rosenshield, *Pushkin and the Genres of Madness: The Masterpieces of 1833* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 89–179.

[3] For a summary of scholarship on the mythic dimensions of Peter's creation, see Daniel Rancour-Laferriere, "The Couvade of Peter the Great," in *Puškin Today*, 73, 226 n. 1.

Pushkin Review/Пушкинский вестник 16–17: 205–31, 2013–14.

tersburg Book of Genesis, beginning in the mind of the city's creator-God," and Gary Rosenshield reads the step-by-step genesis outlined in the Prologue as a metaphoric deification.[4] Without doubt, Peter's biblical pedigree has been well established in the critical literature; but what of his mortal counterpart, Evgeny: did Pushkin's poor hero also have a scriptural forerunner?

Consider the following synopsis:

> *A creator-God surveys his creation. We meet the story's hero, an honorable man who trusts in his creator's existing order. A sudden heavenly interference robs him of his possessions and loved ones. The humble, patient hero of the story's opening is transformed by his devastating loss into an enraged rebel who, convinced of his own innocence, defiantly curses the creator. At the story's climax, the divine injustice drives the mad hero to challenge his God openly, demanding a justification for his suffering. The God-figure descends and, whirling in fury, silences his subject with an overwhelming display of power. The hero, awed by this demonstration of authority, is finally subdued into repentance. In the end, God rewards the hero for his submission by restoring his goods and health twofold.*

Until the final twist, this brief outline of the biblical Book of Job could equally well describe the plot contours of Pushkin's *The Bronze Horseman*. The undeniable thematic similarities led the Soviet critic A. Tarkhov to postulate a Joban subtext to Pushkin's "Petersburg *povest′*"; since the publication of his brief but provocative article in 1977, however, the connections between the two poems have not been more fully explored or elaborated.[5]

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[4] Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 182; Rosenshield, *Genres of Madness*, 91–95. Of course, the Peter-as-Creator interpretation is hardly a recent addition to the critical understanding of the poem. In 1924, the prominent Petersburg scholar Antsiferov identified the unnamed *On* who opens *The Bronze Horseman* as a "дух, творящий из небытия, чудесной волей преодолено сопротивление стихий. 'Да будет свет; и стал свет.' Свершилось чудо творения. Возник новый мир – Петербург" (a spirit creating, out of nothingness, the opposition of the elements overcome through his miraculous will. 'Let there be light; and there was light.' A miracle of creation was accomplished. A new world arose – Petersburg). N. P. Antsiferov, *Byl′ i mif Peterburga*, in *Dusha Peterburga, 1922; Peterburg Dostoevskogo, 1923; Byl′ i mif Peterburga, 1924* (Moscow: Kniga, 1991), 67. All translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

[5] A. Tarkhov, "Povest′ o peterburgskom Iove," *Nauka i religiia*, no. 2 (1977): 62–64. I discovered the Joban underpinnings of *The Bronze Horseman* by chance, while

This study will investigate the rich echoes of the Job text that resound within Pushkin's *The Bronze Horseman* from various perspectives: the poet's familiarity with and admiration for the Old Testament tale, and his treatment of Joban themes in his earlier creative work; the structural and thematic parallels between the biblical story and the nineteenth-century poem; and finally, a close analysis of the key themes of Logos and creation in both texts. At the outset, it is worth considering why the poet might have chosen to pattern Evgeny's tale after the notoriously difficult Book of Job; after all, the revelation of a subtext drawn from the problematic biblical story could hardly serve to simplify *The Bronze Horseman*: the two poems are bound by their refusal to offer an unambiguous message, with each generating multitudes of meanings and providing fertile interpretive ground for generations of critics and general readers alike. Perhaps the answer lies in the repressive political climate of the years directly following the Decembrist uprising, which made it dangerous for artists to deal explicitly with themes of justice, revolt, and individuality; it may be that weaving a Joban thread deep within the fabric of his poem allowed Pushkin to simultaneously explore and conceal these subversive ideas within his work. The Job intertext introduces the politically dangerous notion of theodicy into an already risky poem:[6] the biblical rebel Job decried the lack of justice he discerned in his creator's order and called for divine justification; informed by this subtextual stratum of meaning, Evgeny's apparently unsophisticated threat is revealed to contain a direct challenge to the very legitimacy of Peter's world-building. While no single reading can promise an interpretive key, reevaluating *The Bronze Horseman* through this lens illuminates new facets of the poem's themes of imperial authority and accountability, as well as individual subversion and rebellion.[7]

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researching Job for an unrelated project. Only in the course of investigating Pushkin's interest in the Job story did I uncover Tarkhov's valuable thirty-year-old article, which—though it has made some ripples in Pushkin studies—has unfortunately escaped detailed critical attention in the West.

[6] The tsar is not actually God, of course, and it might seem problematic to apply the term "theodicy" to the analysis of a monarch's injustice. As we shall see, however, Peter's quite literal deification in the eighteenth-century poetic and political traditions legitimizes the treatment of his reign and its interpretation in this light.

[7] The intertextual approach to the poem was galvanized by Pumpiansky's 1939 article on Pushkin's appropriation and subversion of the eighteenth-century odic tradition and Lednicki's magisterial 1955 volume on Pushkin's polemic with Adam Mickiewicz, in which he notes the poem's "mosaic character" in relation to its various sources (Kahn, *Pushkin's The Bronze Horseman*, 17; L. V. Pumpianskii, "'Mednyi Vsadnik' i poeticheskaia traditsiia XVIII veka," in *Vremennik Pushkinskoi kommissii* 4–5 [1939]: 91–124; Wacław Lednicki, *Pushkin's Bronze Horseman: The Story of a Masterpiece* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1955], 19). The approach became more prominent in the 1980s, and recent generations of scholars

Pushkin and Job

By 1833, as Pushkin worked directly on his Petersburg *poema*, the Bible stood at the center of his creative interests.[8] Among the various biblical passages that inspired Pushkin in this period, particular attention must be paid to the poet's deep, personal interest in the Book of Job. Pushkin was hardly alone in his admiration for the Job story. As Thomas Vogler argues, while Job has endured as a perennial favorite among artists and thinkers, certain eras are particularly receptive to the questions posed by the ancient poem, and eighteenth-century Europe displayed such a "Job-ripeness."[9] Indeed, writes Jonathan Sheehan, the Enlightenment period in England and Germany saw a revival of interest in the Book of Job, resulting in dozens of new translations and retellings, both poetic and scholarly, by such thinkers as Lowth, Garnett, Peters, and Chappelow.[10] This new wave of Job inquiry surged into the following century, and the text became a prominent feature of Romantic literature and thought.[11] Well-known Romantic engagements with the Job text include literary analyses by Johann Gottfried von Herder (1782–83) and Thomas Carlyle (1840); William Blake's famous engravings (1806–26); Goethe's *Faust*, which opens with a

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have added sources as ancient as the divine Word (Rosenshield, *Genres of Madness*, 92–93) and as recent as Pushkin's contemporary Washington Irving (Catharine Theimer Nepomnyashchy, "Pushkin's *The Bronze Horseman* and Irving's 'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow': A Curious Case of Cultural Cross-Fertilization?" *Slavic Review* 58: 2 [Summer 1999]: 337–51). These various strands of literary quotation should not be treated as discrete threads, however; they interlace and interact with one another, weaving fine intertextual networks through the poem. Likewise, the Job story is more than just an additional coating of allusion, straining the fabric of an already overworked poem; rather, it shapes and integrates the work's various layers, braiding together sources from the poetic, religious, and political spheres (the eighteenth-century ode; Mickiewicz's *Dziady*; the Genesis story; Pushkin's archival research on Peter the Great) into a single coherent and unified interpretation.

[8] Nemirovskii, "Bibleiskaia tema," 10.

[9] Thomas A. Vogler, "Eighteenth-Century Logology and the Book of Job," *Religion & Literature* 20: 3 (Autumn 1988): 26. Such eras are *Hiob-reif*, in Ehrenberg's term; see Hans Ehrenberg, *Hiob, der Existentialist: Funf Dialoge in zwei Teilen* (Heidelberg: L. Schneider), 1952, quoted in Vogler, "Logology," 25.

[10] Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible: Translation, Scholarship, Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 160–68; for a detailed list of the artists and theorists participating in the movement, see Vogler, "Logology," 26–30.

[11] Ilana Pardes, "Job's Leviathan: Between Melville and Alter," *Prooftexts* 27: 2 (Spring 2007): 237.

quotation from Job (published in full posthumously in 1832);[12] and Melville's *Moby Dick*, which presents, in Vogler's view, America's own "revisionary reaction to the eighteenth-century Job discourse."[13] In addition, Pushkin's Romantic hero Byron named the Book of Job "the first drama in the world and perhaps the oldest poem," going on to admit, "I had an idea of writing a 'Job,' but I found it too sublime. There is no poetry to be compared with it."[14] It should be noted that this artistic embrace of Job extended into Russia as well: Lomonosov composed a famous ode based on God's speech from the whirlwind;[15] the poet Fyodor Glinka began his free translation of the Book of Job in 1826, completing it around the time of *The Bronze Horseman*'s composition; and Fyodor Bruni's painting of the *Nehushtan* ("Mednyi zmii"), whose subject Tarkhov relates to the Book of Job, was also begun in 1826.[16]

The Romantics' artistic enthrallment with the Job text might be explained by the age's preoccupation with political and social injustice; after all, the poem's central theodicy corresponds, in the socio-political realm, to an anxiety over the impotence and degradation of the little man against an omnipotent, deified autocracy. Prior to the Joban renaissance of the eighteenth century, theological and interpretive attention had hovered around the patient Job of the Prologue;[17] the revised Enlightenment representation of the poem, however, emphasized the Almighty's speech from the whirlwind as its true soul.[18] Once attention had shifted from the resigned sufferer Job to the nature of the World-speaking God, Romantic artists were free to indulge "the radical possibility of reading both God and Job as imperfect," a reading that invited a critique of institutions, both re-

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[12] Gerard de Nerval's French translation of the first part of *Faust* was released in 1828; Pushkin's own "Scene from Faust," a lyric modeled on Goethe's poem, was composed that same year.

[13] Vogler, "Logology," 42.

[14] Thomas Medwin, "Conversations of Lord Byron," *The London Magazine* 10 (November 1824): 459; available at http://books.google.com/books?id=V4cYAQAAIAAJ&pg=PA449#v=onepage&q&f=false 29.

[15] M. V. Lomonosov, "*Oda, vybrannaia iz Iova, glava* 38, 39, 40 i 41," in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, ed. S. I. Vavilov (Moscow: Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1950–83), 8: 387.

[16] A. E. Tarkhov, "Razmyshleniia po povodu odnoi illiustratsii k 'Mednomu vsadniku,'" in *Venok Pushkinu*, ed. A. M. Kuznetsov (Moscow: Kniga, 1987), 289n.

[17] Pardes, "Job's Leviathan," 239.

[18] Vogler, "Logology," 26–27. Vogler identifies several trends as characteristic of the eighteenth-century perception of the poem, including an aestheticization of the sublime and an emphasis on power and terror (28); the intellectual humiliation of Job by an obliterating deity (29); and the impotence of human language before the omnipotent divine Logos (34).

ligious and, by extension, political.[19] It is this iteration of the Job story—aesthetically and intellectually reconstituted during the Enlightenment and now viewed through the Romantics' rebellious lens—that Pushkin inherited in 1833.

The first references to Job's name in Pushkin's own correspondence trace back to the period of his young exile: in October 1823, he refers in French to his correspondent Alexander Raevsky as "*aimable Job Lovelace*";[20] later, in June of 1824, he urges Bestuzhev to "Muzhaisia – dai otvet skorei, kak govorit bog Iova ili Lomonosov" (Take heart, and give me an answer quickly, as the god of Job or Lomonosov says),[21] paraphrasing Lomonosov's "Ode, selected from Job." In a spring 1824 letter to his friend Kiukhelbeker, Pushkin alludes to the Bible and Goethe in a single breath, reporting that, while the Holy Spirit is "close to his heart" (*po serdtsu*) when he reads the Bible, he prefers Goethe;[22] as the scholar I. Iu. Iur´eva notes, "It is possible that even then Pushkin had turned his attention to the Book of Job, a cluster of themes and motifs of which are embodied in 'Faust.'"[23] In 1828 he considered prefacing his poem "Chern´" with a line from Job, rendered in drafts as "Poslushaite glagol˝ moikh´" (Listen to my words) and accompanied by the chapter and verse, both written in Old Church Slavonic.[24] Pushkin's citation of the verse and numeral in OCS supports the notion that he had read Job in that language as well as in French translation.[25] Most significantly, in October of 1832, P. V.

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[19] Pardes, "Job's Leviathan," 239.

[20] A. S. Pushkin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, ed. V. D. Bonch-Bruevich et al., 17 vols. (Moscow: Akademiia nauk SSSR, 1937–59), 13: 71. Hereafter, references to the *Polnoe sobranie* will be cited as *PSS*, with volume and page number separated by a colon, e.g., *PSS*, 13: 71.

[21] Ibid., 101.

[22] Ibid., 92.

[23] I. Iu. Iur´eva, "Bibleiskaia Kniga Iova v tvorchestve Pushkina," *Russkaia literatura* 1 (1995): 184.

[24] The quotation, an inexact citation of Job 13: 17 ("Poslushaite, poslushaite glagol moikh"), is identified in the notebook as "Iov˝. Gl. G I." The verse was inscribed on a draft of the poem "Chern´" ("Poet na lire vdokhnovennoi"), and was likely intended as an epigraph for the lyric. See *PSS*, 3: 715.

[25] At the time of the poet's death, his library held a French translation of the entire Bible by Le Maistre de Sacy, a translation of the New Testament into Serbo-Croatian, and two unidentified Bibles. In his later years, Pushkin also purchased six volumes of a new, annotated French translation of the Old Testament with Hebrew on facing pages. B. L. Modzalevskii, *Biblioteka A. S. Pushkina* (1910; repr., Moscow: Kniga, 1988), items 604, 253, 605. For more on the Bible translations to which Pushkin had access, see J. Thomas Shaw, "Puškin's 'The Stationmaster' and the New Testament Parable," *Slavic and East European Journal* 21: 1 (Spring 1977): 6, 24.

Kireevsky wrote to N. M. Yazykov of Pushkin's intention to translate the Book of Job from Hebrew into Russian: "Pushkin byl nedeli dve v Moskve, i tret´ego dnia uekhal. On uchitsia po-evreiski, s namereniem perevodit´ Iova" (Pushkin spent two weeks in Moscow and left the day before yesterday. He is studying Hebrew with the intention of translating Job).[26] In addition to his multivolume French Bible with parallel Hebrew text, Pushkin obtained an 1826 poetic translation of the Book of Job in French.[27] As Kireevsky's letter from Moscow indicates, however, the poet decided not to limit himself either to the available Church Slavonic Bible or to his French translations for his planned translation of Job, but to turn instead to the original text. In order to teach himself ancient Hebrew, Pushkin purchased dictionaries and other specialized editions, including a lexicon of Biblical Hebrew with Latin definitions and a work on the elements of Hebrew written by a professor of Hebrew at the University of London.[28] In May of 1832, he copied the letters of the Hebrew alphabet into a notebook with notes about their sounds, names, and corresponding Greek letters.[29] Tarkhov takes this diligent preparation as confirmation that the Job translation indeed figured prominently among the poet's upcoming projects[30] and conjectures that, although Pushkin's intention to translate Job into Russian ultimately went unrealized, the project would later find reflection in his masterpiece, *The Bronze Horseman*.

Following his return from the South, Pushkin would repeatedly and urgently revisit themes from the Book of Job in his writings. Well before his planned translation of Job, references to the book began to appear in his poetry. The treatment of Joban themes and motifs in his creative work has been discussed variously by Blagoi, Nepomnyashchy, Lesskis, Tarkhov, Chizhov and Iur´eva. In Blagoi's influential reading, the three poems "Vospominanie," "Dar naprasnyi," and "V chasy zabav il´ prazdnoi skuki" comprise a unified cycle, each retelling a different section of the Job story.[31] In her own 1995 article, Iur´eva attempts to follow the poet's treatment of the Job theme more broadly, outlining a sequence of works containing echoes of the biblical text, and attempting to reveal concrete cor-

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[26] *Istoricheskii vestnik* 12 (1883): 535, quoted in A. G. Chizhov, "'…*kak govorit bog Iova ili Lomonosova*': *Iz kommentariia k lirike Pushkina*," *Vremennik Pushkinskoi komissii* 24 (1991): 143.

[27] D. D. Blagoi, *Tvorcheskii put´ Pushkina (1826–1830)* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel´, 1967), 173.

[28] Modzalevskii, *Biblioteka A. S. Pushkina*, items 692, 1014.

[29] Blagoi, *Tvorcheskii put´,* 175.

[30] Tarkhov, "Povest´ o peterburgskom Iove," 62–63.

[31] For a more detailed reading of Pushkin's Job lyrics, see Blagoi, *Tvorcheskii put´,* 172–80.

respondences.[32] In her view, the profound correlations between Pushkin's works and the Book of Job lie beyond the boundaries of earlier critical investigations. Indeed, according to Tarkhov, while Joban motifs sound especially loudly in three lyrics between 1828 and 1830 (which he identifies as "Dar naprasnyi," "Chern´," and "V chasy zabav…"),[33] the most important fruit of this creative union would appear only a few years later, in *The Bronze Horseman*.

The Bronze Horseman and Job

In his 1977 article in the journal *Nauka i religiia*, Tarkhov first claimed the Book of Job as a source of *The Bronze Horseman*.[34] His suggestion of a new biblical influence on the creative history of Pushkin's tale cast the poem—both as a whole and in its separate episodes—in a new light. Identifying the humble civil servant of *The Bronze Horseman* with the defiant rebel of the Old Testament story, Tarkhov characterizes Evgeny's one-man stand against Peter as theomachy, or a battle against God. His three-page article focuses primarily on the depiction of Evgeny's submission in the second part of the poem, showing that his apparent capitulation before the idol does not represent an indiscriminate reacceptance of the Petrine contract. A decade later, Tarkhov expanded his Joban reading of *The Bronze Horseman* by linking it to the well-documented polemic between Pushkin and Mickiewicz. Jozef Tretiak had been the first to note the broad thematic and ideological parallels between Pushkin's *poema* and Mickiewicz's *Oleszkiewicz*, a poem that Pushkin presumably knew well, having copied it into his working notebook and referred to it in a footnote to *The Bronze Horseman*.[35] In Tarkhov's updated analysis, the rebellious "pilgrim" of Mickiewicz's *Digression*, whom scholars read as a prototype for Evgeny,

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[32] Iur´eva, "Bibleiskaia Kniga Iova," 187. Iur´eva views the Job text as a rich source of inspiration for Pushkin's lyric poetry; however, she believes that the poet's extravagant plans to translate or "imitate" the Book of Job ultimately went unfulfilled: "K sozhaleniiu, grandioznyi zamysel poeticheskogo perevoda (ili perelozheniia) Knigi Iova ostalsia neosushchestvlennym" (188; Unfortunately, these grand plans for a poetic translation [or adaptation] of the Book of Job remained unrealized).

[33] Tarkhov, "Povest´ o peterburgskom Iove," 62–64.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Lednicki, *Pushkin's Bronze Horseman*, 36; Basker, "Notes of Confusion," 141. *Oleszkiewicz* is the final poem in the *Digression* section of part III of Mickiewicz's *Forefathers' Eve* (*Dziady*). It is worth noting that Tretiak's groundbreaking 1906 treatment of the two poems was further elaborated in Lednicki's 1955 comparative study, and the Polish origins of Pushkin's poem are still generally accepted over a century after their first assertion. See Jozef Tretiak, *Mickiewicz i Puszkin: Studya i szkice* (Warsaw: Nakladem Ksiegarni E. Wende, 1906).

was inspired by the biblical figure of Samson; Pushkin responded to Mickiewicz's Samsonesque wanderer with his own biblical rebel, based on Job.[36] The scholar Ivinsky finds the Samson–Job connection unconvincing, but he offers his own compelling response to Tarkhov's proposal.[37] As he notes, the penultimate stanza of Mickiewicz's poem, in which the single chain restraining the heaving waves threatens to break beneath audible hammer blows, echoes Job 38, in which God sets barriers to halt the waves of the sea. Ivinsky speculates that this subtle reference, in which Oleszkiewicz prophesies the devastating rupture of the sea's chains, may have given Pushkin the idea to build his own Petersburg flood poem on the same biblical foundation.[38] Ivinsky's hypothesis has merit; as we have seen, Pushkin wrote out Mickiewicz's poem sometime after 1832;[39] it was only a short while earlier, in May of 1832, that he had copied the letters of the Hebrew alphabet into his notebook in preparation for his Job translation. It is not unlikely that the poet, with Job and Oleszkiewicz occupying both his mind and his notes, would have discerned in Mickiewicz's four-line reference to the unfettered waves an allusion to Job.

A more detailed look at the structure and content of the Job story will facilitate further investigation into the textual parallels between the two poems. The forty-two-chapter Old Testament poem consists of a series of verse dialogues set within a prose frame.[40] In the prose introduction, God grants Satan permission to test Job's faith by robbing him, first of his property and children's lives, then of his own health. Job initially reacts to God's verdicts with patient acceptance, but by the opening of the central poem in chapter 3, he has been transformed from the virtuous, long-suffering character familiar from proverbs into a defiant and reproachful man.

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[36] Tarkhov, "Razmyshleniia," 287.

[37] D. P. Ivinskii, *Pushkin i Mitskevich: Istoriia literaturnykh otnoshenii* (Moscow: Iazyki slavianskoi kul´tury, 2003), 297.

[38] Ibid., 304.

[39] Lednicki, *Pushkin's Bronze Horseman*, 25–42.

[40] It may be significant that both the Book of Job and *The Bronze Horseman* are mixed-genre poems, the first a long poem within a short prose frame, and the latter an unconventional verse tale (*povest´*) set against a traditional ode; the generic juxtaposition of each poem underscores an overarching theme of conflict. It is important to remember, however, that prose and poetry were not as clearly distinguished in Hebrew scripture as they are in modern translations of the Bible. There is much controversy in the scholarly tradition surrounding the literary characterization of biblical verses, and our modern generic definitions cannot be easily applied. For the sake of simplicity, I have adopted the standard designation of prose frame and poetic interior as employed in Bruce Zuckerman, *Job the Silent: A Study in Historical Counterpoint* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) and David Penchansky, *The Betrayal of God: Ideological Conflict in Job* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990).

His seemingly unmerited torment convinces him that the source of human suffering is not sin, but rather divine whim and injustice. He verbally attacks God and questions His righteousness, essentially accusing Him of cosmic mismanagement. In the story's climactic confrontation, the voice from the whirlwind does not contradict Job's conclusion; instead, God silences His accuser with a deafening reassertion of His own creative powers. Job is intimidated into repentance, and in the prose epilogue he is rewarded with the restoration of his former prosperity.

Innocence and Challenge

Up until the finale, the Book of Job and *The Bronze Horseman* follow equivalent narrative contours, featuring blameless men who suffer devastating loss at the hand of divine or semi-divine forces and outlining this lowly hero's journey from innocence to insurgency. The Job story introduces its central questions of suffering and justice by conjuring a scenario in which God is lured into a wager with Satan over the righteousness of an innocent subject. God allows Satan to destroy his "blameless and upright" (Job 1: 8) servant without cause, and in quick succession, Job loses his animals, his children, and finally his health. Job patiently endures his losses, demonstrating his initial acceptance of God's order: "'The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord'" (Job 1: 21). In Pushkin's *poema*, Evgeny's once-exalted family name (*prozvan´e*) has been diminished, and his rightful position effectively dissolved by the Petrine restructuring of the civil service. We are offered a glimpse of his compliant nature through his response to his disadvantaged social position: although entitled to higher rank under the old order (the very name Evgeny, or "high-born," implies this entitlement; one might surmise that he, like Pushkin, is descended from one of those once-powerful families that lost influence under Peter's reforms), he is not resentful about his lowered standing and is instead ready to work to gain "i nezavisimost´ i chest´" (independence as well as honor).[41] Like Job, then, Evgeny is reconciled to his initial "loss"; only later, after his love Parasha has been swept away by the flood, along with his dream of a simple family life, will this compliance be truly tested.

Following an initial acceptance of loss, the hero of each poem rises up to challenge the creator who caused his suffering, either directly or indirectly. Job's transition from the passive servant of the prologue to the active hero of the poetic discourses is signaled by seven days of silence, bro-

[41] *PSS*, 5: 139. Hereafter, references to volume 5 of the *Polnoe sobranie*, the volume which contains *The Bronze Horseman*, will be identified within the text by page number only. All translations of *The Bronze Horseman* are adapted from Walter Arndt's *Pushkin Threefold* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1972), 401–27.

ken with a curse. In an abrupt reversal of the meekness he displayed in the first two chapters, Job now begins to chronicle his every misery, loudly challenging the conventional notion of "Job the patient."[42] Job identifies the cause of his suffering as divine injustice and presents his new perception of God in a series of remarkable speeches. Job's revised portrayal paints God as an arbitrary, unaccountable, and unjust bully. Through the discourses, Job characterizes God variously as a thief, a criminal, a violent warrior, a predator, and a murderer.[43] Finally, he questions the Creator's very order, charging that his creation lacks meaning, order, or a coherent moral pattern.[44] His persistent efforts to defend his virtue before God demonstrate his need to discern order and causality in an unjust universe.[45] Finally, Job issues a direct challenge to God: "'Oh, that I had one to hear me! (Here is my signature! Let the Almighty answer me!)'" (Job 31: 35).

Like Job before him, the pre-flood Evgeny is portrayed as a submissive member of his creator's order—hardly a candidate for rebellion. In part 2 of the poem we learn that Evgeny, driven mad by his loss of Parasha, has been wandering the streets of Petersburg since the floodwaters receded nearly a year before. Like Job, Evgeny spends the transitional period between passivity and revolt in silence: "Uzhasnykh dum / Bezmolvno polon, on skitalsia" (145–46; of horrid thoughts / Speechlessly full, he roved about). In each poem, the portrait of the ruined hero highlights his debasement and ostracism from the social order he once embraced: the children's treatment of the mad Evgeny—"On skoro svetu / Stal chuzhd […] Zlye deti / Brosali kamni vsled emu" (Soon to the world he / Became a stranger […] Wicked children / Threw stones at his back)—echoes Job's ancient complaint: "They abhor me, they keep aloof from me; they do not hesitate to spit at the sight of me" (Job 30: 10).

One night Evgeny wakes up on Senate Square, the site of his first encounter with Peter. His abrupt transition into an active state is highlighted grammatically with a string of perfective verbs: *prosnulsia*, *vsko-*

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[42] For more on the proverbial "patience of Job" versus the actual biblical portrait, see Zuckerman, *Job the Silent*, 13–15.

[43] "He snatches away; who can stop him? Who will say to him, 'What are you doing?'" (Job 9: 12); "The earth is given into the hand of the wicked; he covers the eyes of its judges—if it is not he, who then is it?" (Job 9: 24); "He bursts upon me again and again; he rushes at me like a warrior" (Job 16: 14); "Bold as a lion you hunt me; you repeat your exploits against me" (Job 10: 16); "See, he will kill me; I have no hope; but I will defend my ways to his face" (Job 13: 15).

[44] "It is all one; therefore I say, he destroys both the blameless and the wicked" (9: 22); "Why do the wicked live on, reach old age, and grow mighty in power?" (21: 7).

[45] "I would give him an account of all my steps; like a prince I would approach him" (31: 37).

chil, *vstal*, *poshel* (146–47; wakened, jumped up, rose, took off). As Evgeny awakens, the hostile Neva is depicted as a fellow target of Peter's subjugating tendencies, her course again corseted in granite; her waves grumble and beat against the smooth steps of the embankment "Kak chelobitchik u dverei / Emu ne vnemliushchikh sudei" (146; Like a petitioner at the door / Of magistrates who do not heed him). The mounting rain and wind recreate the flood conditions of the previous year, and the memory of that event sharpens the clerk's consciousness: "Proiasnilis´ / V nem strashno mysli" (147; His thoughts became / Horrifyingly clear). Finally back at the scene of his loss, Evgeny recognizes both the site of the flood and the terrible *kumir* (idol) on horseback.[46] His thoughts drawing into focus, Evgeny suddenly identifies his foe—and the enemy of nature more generally—in the wonder-working tsar: "On uznal […] Togo, ch´ei volei rokovoi / Pod morem gorod osnovalsia" (147; He recognized […] Him by whose fateful will / The city by the sea was founded). Evgeny shudders, as though finally connecting Peter, the conquered Neva, the flood, and his own terrible loss. Although it is not stated explicitly, Evgeny appears to grow conscious here that the creator-tsar is to blame for his suffering.[47] Finally, he issues his own open challenge to Peter: "'Dobro, stroitel´ chudotvornyi! […] Uzho tebe!'" (148; All right then, wonder-working builder! […] I'll show you!).

The poem's Old Testament subtext sheds light on this climactic outburst, with Job's lengthy diatribe providing broader context for Evgeny's comparatively brief threat (where Evgeny flings a mere two lines at his creator, Job fills twenty chapters with his various curses, accusations, and demands to God). If Job's indictment of God and his "order" indeed served as a blueprint for Evgeny's confrontation with Peter, then the five words voiced by the clerk represent a far more detailed critique of Peter's creation than would first appear. Evgeny's sudden insight into the human cost of the Petrine vision bares to him the lack of a moral pattern at the heart of the tsar's wondrous creation. His defiant outburst represents his recognition and charge of divine injustice, just as Job had questioned the legitimacy of God's order in his own speeches. By naming Peter the sole architect (*stroitel´*) of the artificial, doomed city, Evgeny essentially accuses him

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[46] As Bethea notes, Pushkin captures the entire, anti-Christian orientation of Peter's city and worldview in the loaded word *kumir*, with its implications of an "old, pre-Christian, pagan" idol. See David Bethea, "Stabat Pater: Revisiting the 'Monumental' in Peter, Petersburg, Pushkin," *Zapiski Russkoi Akademicheskoi Gruppy v SShA./Transactions of the Association of Russian-American Scholars in the USA* 33 (2004): 10–11.

[47] Rosenshield reads this passage from Evgeny's point of view, as a "transcription of Evgenii's unexpressed thoughts" as he realizes that Peter alone is responsible for his fate, as well as for that of Russia (*Genres of Madness*, 111).

of criminal hubris: the tsar's willful subjugation of nature and imposition of reason and order (*stroi*) have ultimately unleashed chaos, leaving his city threatened by the very forces it once stood as a monument against. Essentially, Evgeny's sarcastic allegations of wonder-working (after all, a real *chudo* [miracle] can be accomplished only by the gods) call Peter's assumed divinity into question.

Response and Submission

Toward the end of Job, following the revolt and accusations of a once-loyal subject, the creator descends to face his confronter. Scholars have long been divided in their interpretation of God's speech to Job from the whirlwind. Some claim that, by deigning to descend from heaven to address the accusations of a single member of his creation, God demonstrates divine compassion and care for those who suffer.[48] Many, however, see the Lord's speeches as "an intimidating display of power," empty bluster signaling a blunt refusal to engage His accuser on the pivotal issues of cosmic causality and justice.[49] Still others, focusing on the contents of God's speech, discern in it a poetic apologia, in which He defends His Cosmos against charges of chaos, and Himself against accusations of criminality.[50] God's theological self-defense hinges on His role as designer of a stable, well-ordered universe. His thundering defense emphasizes the limitations of Job's knowledge, while asserting His own responsibility to protect the cosmos by, for instance, holding back the waters of chaos; such limits, His speech implies, are for the good of the cosmic community. The distinctions among these readings hold enormous implications for the overall interpretation of the poem and its central theodicy.

Job is widely considered the preeminent biblical inquiry into the question of theodicy, or man's attempt to reconcile a benevolent God with the existence of evil. Job's primary criticism of God's order lies in its incomprehensibility, its seeming lack of connection between cause and effect—his piety and the resulting punishment. Reason is hidden from man, leaving the benevolence of the creator and the meaning of His cosmos unfathomable. God's blistering address to Job from the whirlwind provides two plausible, though conflicting, responses to the issue: He either rebuffs human concern for theodicy, bluntly putting his insignificant subject back

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[48] For a summary of scholars who discern in God's appearance a show of compassion toward His tormented creature, see Leo G. Perdue, *Wisdom in Revolt: Metaphorical Theology in the Book of Job* (Sheffield: The Almond Press, 1991), 197 n. 1.

[49] Norman C. Habel, "In Defense of God the Sage," in *The Voice from the Whirlwind: Interpreting the Book of Job*, ed. Leo G. Perdue and W. Clark Gilpin (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 33.

[50] See ibid., 35.

in his place, or, by deigning to address his tormented creature, the Creator commits an act of compassionate abasement. One reading resolves the problem of theodicy with the dismissive explanation that human suffering is trivial and insignificant, while the alternative offers assurance that suffering is an integral part of a divine, though unknowable, cosmic design.

In Pushkin's poem, the Horseman's clangorous pursuit of Evgeny parallels God's thunderous appearance from the whirlwind; his response to his questioning subject, though wordless, seems designed to be as ambiguous and multivalent as God's speeches to Job.[51] In this poem, too, critics have discerned several alternate, yet equally defensible readings of Peter's descent. In one common interpretation, the mighty tsar effectively intimidates his rebellious subject into submission, forever silencing his revolt. According to this reading of the poem, individual protest is futile, subject to official punishment at the pitiless hands of Peter, the incarnation of historical necessity.[52] Another interpretive line attempts to address *why* Peter would descend to pursue such an "insignificant" madman as Evgeny, whose incoherent, seemingly harmless threats should hardly be cause for such alarm. These critics remark that, by descending from his rock to chase a common subject through the streets of Petersburg, Peter betrays a very ungodlike vulnerability, as if afraid of how Evgeny's revolt could upset the order of his creation.[53]

Against the proposed biblical subtext, the horseman's pursuit of Evgeny, like the theophanic whirlwind of Job, may be read as Peter's attempt to defend his order against his subject's indictment. In this reading, Peter recognizes the potentially destabilizing power contained in the words uttered by his rebellious subject. Evgeny, circling the statue's feet like the long-abated floodwaters of the uncontainable Neva, represents a disruptive force that must be channeled and subdued, like the chaotic sea in God's defense to Job. Peter's physical hemming in of Evgeny's movements that night embodies the tsar's self-defense: he must control unruly elements in the interest of the State. As God's speech from the whirlwind revealed to Job, individual loss is justified by an overarching order, imperceptible to men. It must be noted, however, that Peter's is a physically

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[51] It is worth recalling that in the post-Enlightenment version of Job familiar to Pushkin, scholarly and artistic attention to the poem had drifted from the exemplary fortitude of the hero to the divine qualities conveyed in God's speech; emphasis was placed as much on the formidability or perceived limitations of the Creator as on the virtues of his creature (Pardes, "Job's Leviathan," 239).

[52] Lednicki, *Pushkin's Bronze Horseman,* 81.

[53] As Bethea writes, "the most significant fact about the climax of Puškin's poem is not that the hero perishes [...] but that the 'unshakeable' statue is provoked into motion by the *words*, the 'Just you wait!' [*Uzho tebe*] of the little man" ("The Role of the Eques," 117).

threatening response, as opposed to the elaborate verbal self-defense provided by God. Peter's purely physical annihilation of his victim suggests the tsar's inability to justify Evgeny's loss in terms of state interests; this linguistic breakdown calls Peter's "divinity" further into question.[54]

The first part of *The Bronze Horseman* concludes with a suggestion of the creator's whimsical indifference to his creation: "il´ vsia nasha / I zhizn´ nichto, kak son pustoi / Nasmeshka neba nad zemlei?" (142; Or is all our / Very life nothing but an idle dream, / heaven's mockery of earth?). The narrator's rhetorical question corresponds to similar charges raised by Job throughout his poem: "'When disaster brings sudden death, he mocks at the calamity of the innocent'" (Job 9: 23). In Pushkin's poem, however, the question of theodicy is left essentially unanswered: the Horseman's deafening pursuit of Evgeny, the poem's climactic assertion of the creator's ultimate dominion over his creation, demonstrates only the divine prohibition against a subject's questioning His order. By contrast with the blustering whirlwind, the tsar Peter attempts to silence and contain *his* unruly subject by mute, brute force; it would appear that questions of theodicy are irrelevant in a city whose creator is not God, but rather tyrannical Idol.

Submission

Although God's speeches from the whirlwind refuse to offer any immediate consolation for Job's suffering or to address his issues with theodicy, Job repents following the theophanic appearance. He professes to accept the limits of human knowledge and declares an end to his verbal assault against God;[55] in the epilogue, God rewards his servant by restoring his property, family, and health twofold. In contrast to the previous sections of the poem, Evgeny's capitulation following his confrontation with Peter represents a decisive departure from the Joban blueprint; the divergence is especially striking in comparison with the clear textual parallelism seen in the other major events of the poem. In the most obvious Pushkinian revision, where Job regained his lost property following his submission before God, Evgeny is destroyed rather than rewarded. Tarkhov's article focuses almost exclusively on this episode and its illumination through a comparative reading with the Joban text. In Tarkhov's ingenious reading,

[54] As Vogler points out, the distinction between the omnipotent Word of God and the inadequate human tongue had been a primary characteristic of the eighteenth-century reading of the Job story. Peter's wordless, almost animalistic response to his own Job recollects and intensifies this divide between the earthly and the divine ("Logology," 34).

[55] "Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know" (Job 42: 3); "I lay my hand on my mouth" (Job 40: 4).

Evgeny presses his hand to his heart to subdue the passions that prompted his mutiny: "K serdtsu svoemu / On prizhimal pospeshno ruku / Kak by ego smiriaia muku" (148; To his heart / He would hastily press his hand, / as if soothing its agony). Whereas Job had signaled an end to his verbal feud with God by covering his mouth with his hand, Evgeny lays his own hand upon his heart. To Tarkhov, this gesture of seeming repentance does not signify a renunciation of his earlier rebellion, but rather the hero's effort to control his still-raging emotions, representing Evgeny's main point of divergence from his Old Testament prototype.[56] Ultimately, of course, Evgeny dies young, mad and penniless, his fate contrasting starkly with Job's long, prosperous life. Tarkhov's reading would suggest that the clerk is not recompensed because he does not truly repent, as his precursor Job had. The poem's Petersburg context, however, suggests a darker, and equally plausible, explanation for this divergence from the Joban template. Despite the luminous creation scene of the Prologue, Peter is not divine, and Petersburg is far from God's creation; the rebel Evgeny meets his sad end precisely because Peter is merely an impostor-God. This sense of Peter as *kumir*, his dazzling creation merely a temporary break in chaos,[57] is strengthened by the dark implications in the poem's epilogue that the old, pre-Petrine order is reasserting itself. The final, more speculative section of this paper will explore this idea of Peter as a false creator, the foundation of whose cosmos is shaken by the words of his puniest creature.[58]

"Let that day be darkness!": Performative Language in *Job* and *The Bronze Horseman*

How could the dark mutterings of a mad subject pose a threat to Peter's dazzling creation? To answer this question, it is necessary to examine the

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[56] For details of this re-reading of Evgeny's *smirenie*, see Tarkhov, "Povest´ o peterburgskom Iove," 63–64.

[57] For more on the cosmos/chaos imbalance in Petersburg, see V. N. Toporov, *Peterburgskii tekst russkoi literatury: Izbrannye trudy* (St. Petersburg: Iskusstvo—SPB, 2003). As he writes, "Istoriia Peterburga myslitsia zamknutoi; ona ne chto inoe, kak nekii vremennnyi proryv v khaose" (41; The history of Petersburg appears closed; it is nothing other than a temporary break in the chaos).

[58] I am grateful to my reviewers, one of whom provided extensive feedback on this final section, inspiring fruitful reflection on the literality and historicity of my discussion of creative language. While s/he is correct that a more literalist viewpoint might not allow for such a figurative reading of the play of language in these two poems, I believe that my interpretation stems from a traditional understanding of the biblical Logos. I rely upon the generosity of my readers to consider my argument in this light, and with the understanding that I do not advance this reading singularly, to the exclusion of all others.

role of language in both Pushkin's tale and its ancient predecessor. In the Book of Job, as in the Bible more generally, the Word (Logos, the divine agent of creation) holds a performative power: speaking engenders action. The preeminent Old Testament instance of Logos occurs in the Book of Genesis, in which God speaks each element of creation into being, naming its proper place and function in his order.[59] Job's revolt against his creator is correspondingly staged by means of the Word. His departure in the third chapter from "God-fearing" servant to angry rebel is represented verbally: he spends a week in silence, as though willfully countering God's seven-day act of creation-by-Word, finally breaking his silence with a curse: "After this Job opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth" (3: 1).[60] With his transformation from passivity to defiance aptly signaled by a curse, Job expands his verbal assault to include the moments of his con-

[59] Despite its conventional translation as "word," the term *logos* encompasses a breadth of meanings, from the spoken utterance itself to its underlying topic, logic, reason, or idea. While a full account of its various dimensions in the Western philosophical and theological traditions is beyond the scope of this study, I will briefly outline here the factors that most influenced my own use of the term. Early Christian thinkers adopted the notion of an internally-divided, yet indivisible entity that permeated, ordered and animated the universe from the Stoics and Philo, from which grew the Christian idea of the Word as Trinity, an indivisible tripartite in which God, Son and Word are all one. The Gospel of John begins with a hymn to the Word, identifying the Logos as God, and Jesus Christ as the Logos incarnate: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. […] And the Word became flesh and lived among us." The incarnation of Christ represents the principal post-Genesis instance of God's performative language, and the most important act of the divine Logos in the New Testament. This article employs the term *logos* in a sense similar to that described in the writings of Philo and John: it is a creative, animating force that engenders and animates the cosmos, a source of verbal generation. To a lesser extent, my definition will draw on the tenets of speech act theory, a major movement in the philosophy of language begun in the 1950s by the English philosopher J. L. Austin and his American student, John Searle. Speech act theory, which seeks to characterize certain verbal acts and interactions, brought focus to what it termed "performative" aspects of language. In performative speech, the very act of uttering a word also enacts it; for instance, the words "I now pronounce you man and wife" actually perform the action they express. See J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things with Words,* 2nd ed., ed. J. O. Urmson and Marina Sbisa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976). I will use the word "logos" more or less interchangeably with the terms Word; divine Word; and performative word or language.

[60] In antiquity, the act of cursing or blessing was thought to assume real, creative power under the proper conditions. Carol A. Newsom, "The Book of Job," in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 4, *The First Book of Maccabees, the Second Book of Maccabees, Introduction to Hebrew Poetry, the Book of Job, the Book of Psalms*, ed. Robert Doran et al. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 366.

ception and birth: "'Let the day perish in which I was born, and the night that said, 'A man-child is conceived'" (Job 3: 3). In the speech that follows, Job lyrically and systematically subverts God's careful arrangement of the cosmos: he curses day and night and inverts light and dark ("May God above not seek [that day], or light shine on it"; 3: 4); he disrupts time and the order of days ("let [that day] not rejoice among the days of the year"; 3: 6); and, finally, he annuls the boundary between life and death itself ("Why did I not die at birth, come forth from the womb and expire?"; 3: 11). His curse reaches its profane apogee with an explicit inversion of creation language: "Let that day be darkness!" (Job 3: 4).[61] This startling expletive, designed to drag God's bright creation back into the darkness of oblivion, has been described by one Job scholar as a "counter cosmic incantation."[62] In the verbally charged atmosphere of the Old Testament, by reversing and destabilizing the creation narrative articulated in Genesis, Job threatens to overturn and destroy God's created order by means of his subversive words.

In the context of ancient thought, Job's curses, challenges, and indictments function as so-called "performatives," deliberately calculated to unleash the dark forces of chaos against the light of God's order.[63] Following Job's attempts "to deconstruct the metaphor of creation by word with his

[61] The French translation that Pushkin used ("Que ce jour se change en ténèbres") renders the comparison with Genesis 1: 3 ("Que la lumière soit faite") just as clearly. Interestingly, while the modern Russian translation ("Den´ tot da budet t´moiu") makes the Genesis connection explicit, the OCS, which Pushkin may have consulted, defangs Job's curse by swapping out day for night ("ta noshch´ budi tma"), as though inverting divine speech and casting the Lord's light back into darkness might be too seditious an act for the translator(s) to repeat. It is worth noting that the Hebrew *yom* (day) is translated as the expected *den´* through the remainder of Job 3, as well as in Genesis; the day/night substitution applies only to the curse in 3: 4, suggesting that this is no misinterpretation on the part of the translator, but a deliberate revision of the verse. Whatever the scribe's reasoning, as the power of Job's expletive clearly derives from his radical reversal of day into darkness, the OCS version renders the intended anti-creation imagery of the curse senseless.

[62] Michael Fishbane, "The Book of Job and Inner-biblical Discourse," in *The Voice from the Whirlwind*, ed. Leo G. Perdue and W. Clark Gilpin (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 43.

[63] Contemporary studies of sacred texts and prayer have been increasingly informed by J. L. Austin's categories of performative language, which stresses the ability of words and verbal formulae to perform or enact the speaker's wishes. For more on the performativity of ancient language in the biblical context, see Grant R. Osborne, *The Hermeneutical Spiral: A Complete Introduction to Biblical Interpretation*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 119–21.

own linguistic assault,"[64] God is obliged to restabilize the language of cosmos. In his self-justifying speeches from the whirlwind, God refers back to "the very architecture of creation, to his protection of the cosmos by damming up the waters of chaos."[65] He refers in his sermon to the Earth, sea, heavens, day and night, and various animals of the earth, air and sea; the resulting panorama presents a virtual catalogue of creation, clearly intended to echo His originating act of Genesis. God further flaunts to his servant that he controls the chaotic waters by voice alone: "Or who shut in the sea with doors […] and said, 'Thus far shall you come, and no farther, and here shall your proud waves be stopped?'" God then accuses Job of "darkening his counsel" with "words without knowledge." These words, he implies, are not simply ignorant; rather, Job's various curses, indictments, and challenges represent a subversive, destructive anti-Logos that threatens God's order with chaos. In the world of *The Bronze Horseman*, language, rooted in the divine Logos, becomes similarly performative. As Rosenshield notes, paraphrasing John 1, "at the beginning, the Word is with Peter, and the creation of the city and the empire emanate from that Word."[66] Indeed, the ode to Peter in the Prologue presents the formation of Petersburg in language that strongly echoes God's verbal creation of the world: Peter's "Zdes´ budet gorod zalozhen" (135; Let there be a city here)[67] carries undeniable traces of God's "Let there be light."

As Pushkin undoubtedly knew, the sacralization of monarchy was a commonplace of the odic tradition.[68] The poetic exaltation of royalty was realized primarily on the religious plane,[69] and it became common in Russian panegyric literature of the Enlightenment age to replace the name of a deity with that of a monarch. The metaphor of tsar as creator-God was particularly well developed in poems eulogizing Peter I:[70] Trediakovsky

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[64] Perdue, *Wisdom in Revolt*, 204.

[65] Tryggve N. D. Mettinger, "The God of Job: Avenger, Tyrant, or Victor?" in *The Voice from the Whirlwind*, 45.

[66] Rosenshield, *Genres of Madness*, 117.

[67] Originally reported to be "Zdes´ byt´ gorodu," heightening the correspondence with the OCS "da budet˝ svet˝."

[68] For a comprehensive discussion of the deification of royal authority in eighteenth-century Russia, see V. M. Zhivov and B. A. Uspenskii, "Tsar´ i bog: Semioticheskie aspekty sakralizatsii monarkha v Rossii," in *Iazyki kul´tury i problemy perevodimosti,* ed. Uspenskii (Moscow: Nauka, 1987), 121–35; and Stephen Baehr, *The Paradise Myth in Eighteenth-Century Russia: Utopian Patterns in Early Secular Russian Literature and Culture* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1991).

[69] Zhivov and Uspenskii, "Tsar´ i bog," 121.

[70] Baehr, *Paradise Myth*, 42. For a broader discussion of the poetic and political image of Peter I in the age of Enlightenment, see Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *The*

dubbed Peter the creator (*sotvoritel´*) of his State, employing a word commonly associated with the God of Genesis; Lomonosov proclaimed Peter Russia's God; and Derzhavin mused about whether the sovereign might actually be God himself, descended to earth.[71] Beyond the poetic realm, too, Peter was hailed by official eulogists as the God of the new Empire. At a 1721 ceremony marking Russia's transformation from *tsarstvo* into empire, Count G. I. Golovkin, a chancellor and close member of Peter's entourage, was chosen to present the tsar with his new titles of Emperor (*imperator*) and Father of the fatherland (*Otets otechestva*). In his oratory, Golovkin hailed Peter for leading his metaphorical sons out of the darkness (*t´ma*) of ignorance into the glory of the world (*svet*), and from nonbeing into being (*iz nebytiia v bytie*).[72] Zhivov interprets these famous lines within the broader context of eighteenth-century royal appropriations of the sacred, noting that the formula "from nonbeing into being" echoes what he terms the most important prayer of the Orthodox Liturgy: "Bozhe sviatyi … Izhe ot nebytiia vo ezhe byti privedyi vsiacheskaia…" (Holy God … who has brought all things from nonbeing into being).[73] The amateur historian P. N. Krekshin, who served under Peter and wrote one of his first biographies, follows suit, addressing the object of his devotion as "our father, Peter the Great [… who] led us from nonexistence into existence."[74] His fawning declaration—an unmistakable synthesis of the Lord's Prayer and the Trisagion Prayer—confirms Zhivov's characterization of Peter and his people playing on the well-known Orthodox subtext and actively ap-

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Image of Peter the Great in Russian History and Thought (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 3–85.

[71] "Svoego gosudarstva novyi sotvoritel´" (the new creator of his state) (V. K. Trediakovskii, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia* [Leningrad: Sovetskii pisatel´, 1963], 58); "On Bog, on Bog tvoi byl, Rossiia" (Your God, your God he was, O Russia) (Lomonosov, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 8: 109); "Ne Bog li v nem skhodil s nebes?" (Was it God who descended from heaven in his shape?) (quoted in Zhivov and Uspenskii, "Tsar´ i bog," 130).

[72] Quoted in V. M. Zhivov, "Kul´turnye reformy v sisteme preobrazovanii Petra I," in *Iz istorii russkoi kul´tury*, ed. A. D. Koshelev et al. (Moscow: Iazyki russkoi kul´tury, 1996), 550.

[73] Zhivov, "Kul´turnye reformy," 550; the line comes from the Trisagion Prayer (Molitva Trisviatogo Peniia) of the Divine Liturgy. Compare Zhivov's interpretation to that of Uspenskii, who views the renaming of the tsar as part of Peter's general cultural reorientation, and claims that the "priniatie imperatorskogo titula bylo kul´turnym, a ne religioznym aktom" (adopting the imperial title was a cultural act, rather than a religious one). B. A. Uspenskii, *Tsar´ i imperator: Pomazanie na tsarstvo i semantika monarshikh titulov* (Moscow: Iazyki russkoi kul´tury, 2000), 48.

[74] Quoted in Zhivov and Uspenskii, *Tsar´ i bog*, 90.

propriating the power of the heavenly Father for the Father of the fatherland.[75]

Pushkin was certainly aware of the conventional connection between the Petrine revolution and the Old Testament creation of the world—both poetical and political—when he penned his Prologue to his Petersburg tale. He carefully reproduces the stages of the divine Creation in Peter's own act of world-formation, both drawing to a close and putting a twist on the eighteenth-century panegyric tradition. On the first day, both Peter and God appear over a formless, unarticulated, and dark landscape to speak a new world into creation; where God calls forth life-giving light, Peter thinks forth his resplendent city.[76] Over the next two days, God separates sky from water, and water from dry land, allowing heaven to rise and vegetation to creep over the land. Peter, in turn, divides the formerly undifferentiated waters of the sea, mists and marshy banks with a "window" to Europe; he corrects and contains the course of the river, enclosing it in granite embankments; bridges appear, separating the wet from dry land; buildings rise on the once-soaked shore, and gardens flourish on the newly revealed islands.

The pronounced parallels with Genesis break down on the fourth day, when God separates day from night, creating two great lights to rule over them. In contrast, day and night never fully separate in Peter's new city, and there are no "great lights," save the shining Admiralty needle; the same half-light that reigned in the pre-cosmogonic murk later features in the narrator's extended paean to his city's eerily bright, though moonless, night.[77] This abrupt deviation from biblical template—the peculiarly

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[75] Zhivov, "Kul´turnye reformy," 550.

[76] It is important to recall that the poem does not offer an assessment of the historical Peter; rather, it is concerned with his legacy, as exemplified in monument, city, and empire, and with his image, as preserved in the popular imagination (see Rosenshield, *Genres of Madness*, 222 n. 6). In literal terms, Peter ordered a city to be built upon the swamp, and a new capital was created according to his plan. On the mythopoetic level, however (and this is the level on which Pushkin treats his subject), tsar is elevated to divinity, a creator-god possessed of a creative impulse whose very articulation in thought ("I dumal on") appears to bring it to fruition in the very next stanza.

[77] "И лес, неведомый лучам / В тумане спрятанного солнца, / Кругом шумел" (135; And forest, alien to the rays / Of the fog-enshrouded sun / Murmured all about); "Твоих задумчивых ночей / Прозрачный сумрак, блеск безлунный, / Когда я в комнате моей / Пишу, читаю без лампады, / И ясны спящие громады / Пустынных улиц, и светла / Адмиралтейская игла, / И не пуская тьму ночную / На золотые небеса, / Одна заря сменить другую / Спешит, дав ночи полчаса" (136; Of your pensive nights / The translucent twilight, the moonless sheen, when in my room I / Write or read without a lamp, / And clear there show the slumbering expanses / Of deserted streets, and brightly shines / The needle of the Ad-

Petersburgian mingling of day and night—suggests the limits of Peter's power: this godlike tsar is incapable of teasing light from darkness. Next, in striking contrast to God's creation of man in his own image at the climactic point in Genesis, Peter's creation seems to actually displace and fragment its human inhabitants: the lonely Finn, present at the city's chaotic beginnings, is soon replaced by elegant crowds of buildings. The only living creatures to appear in the Prologue, nearly lost among the narrator's radiant description of the capital's architecture, ships, waters and "deserted streets," emerge in abstracted fragments: "girlish faces," "voices at a ball," and a "bachelor's feast" (137) give only metonymic glimpses of the city's human element. Even beyond the Prologue, the population of Peter's glorious new capital seems strangely sparse; other than the crowds that throng the Neva after the flood, the streets of the city stand empty. Altogether, these fragmented bodies and deserted squares display the limits of Peter's power: he might attempt to tame the waters, but even he cannot create man.[78] The account of this latter-day genesis closes with the creator's rest—"vechnyi son Petra" (137; Peter's eternal sleep); although Peter has failed to live up to his divine precursor, he concludes his own act of creation with an eternal (though uneasy) sleep.

When read against its Old Testament model, the overall impression of Pushkin's Prologue is one of a stunted or incomplete Creation narrative. Behind the brilliant façade and dazzling light of Peter's capital, we now see, lie the contours of a distorted, unnatural genesis. In fact, it is the unnatural, unbounded light itself that betrays the artifice and perversion of Peter's undertaking. Critics generally see an undermining of the Petersburg myth beginning in part 1, as the shadows and flood of the *povest´* provide a dark counterpoint to the radiant portrait on display in the Prologue. A close comparison of the two creation myths, however, allows us to see that the deflation of the Petrine vision begins in the luminous Prologue itself, with Peter's deformed act of creation. Pushkin's Prologue ultimately presents a challenge to the panegyric culture that depicted Peter as God. In Baehr's words, it may be read on one level as an "'anti-ode' to a pretender-god."[79]

During the flood, the stages of creation described in the Prologue are systematically undone. The darkness of the opening scene, richly expressed in the opening passage—*omrachennym, osennim, pozdno, temno* (darkened, autumnal, late, dark)—effectively annuls the principal act of creation ("let there be light"). In the gloom, the Neva begins to thrash

miralty spire, / And barring the gloom of night / From the golden skies, / One dawn hurries to relieve the other, / Allowing half-an-hour to night).

[78] Note that even Evgeny's very name, with its connotations of natural birth and genesis, presents an affront to this false Creator-god.

[79] Baehr, *Paradise Myth*, 165.

against the granite walls fashioned for her in the Prologue—"Pleskaia shumnoiu volnoi / V kraiia svoei ogrady stroinoi, / Neva metalas´" (138; Splashing with noisy wave / Against the edges of her neat embankment / Neva was tossing)—threatening to overwhelm Peter's tight control over his city's waters. When rain pounds against Evgeny's window, the image evokes the historic window of the Prologue, which separated and contained the chaotic waters of the swamp. The strict division between wet and dry ground, so primary in the creation narrative, begins to dissolve with the rising of the river and the raising of the bridges. The floodwaters push the created order back into oblivion, as the orderly, intentional streets of Petersburg are submerged beneath the chaotic waves; wherever the unruly river flows, Peter's creation is brusquely emptied out: "Pred neiu / Vse pobezhalo, vse vokrug / vdrug opustelo" (140; Before her / All fled, all about / Was suddenly deserted).[80]

Interestingly, as a pale dawn breaks through the waning darkness following the flood—"Redeet mgla nenastnoi nochi / I blednyi den´ uzh nastaet […] Uzhasnyi den´!" (140; The foul night's fog thinning, / And pale day already drawing up… / That day of horror!)—we see that day and night are now divided, albeit thinly, attenuating the constant light of Peter's creation myth. This is the only place where conditions in Pushkin's Petersburg correspond to the "natural" order: day has begun to pull itself away from the night, and the city teems with people. The unruly elements appear to have swept away Peter's unnatural order and reinstated something closer to God's. Alexander's resigned acknowledgment of powerlessness before the elements—"S Bozhiei stikhiei / Tsariam ne sovladet´" (141; Against God's element / There is no prevailing for tsars)—grants ascendancy to the Prologue's *pobezhdennaia stikhiia* (subjugated elements), once conquered by Peter's unholy Logos. The stages of creation so carefully reproduced in the introduction have now effectively dissolved in the chaotic floodwaters, suggesting the ultimate instability of Peter's creation.[81]

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[80] This wholesale destruction undoes every aspect of Peter's cosmos. Along with the disordered order and the reunion of land and water, there is a distinct and creepy hint of the reversal of life and death: alongside the logs and roofs that are carried away by the waves, "Groba s razmytogo kladbishcha / Plyvut po ulitsam!" (141; Coffins from the flooded cemetery / Float down the streets!). This image of the dead, disturbed from their rest and repopulating the city's streets, calls to mind Toporov's characterization of Petersburg as a *nekropol´*, or city of the dead. His statistics paint a disturbing picture of the capital as a "death factory" (*Peterburgskii tekst*, 32), an enormous facility for the production and processing of dead bodies.

[81] This reversal of Peter's creation, as cosmos literally dissolves in chaos, is an extraordinary literary rendering of the city's eschatological mythology. According to Toporov, the eschatology of Petersburg derives from its "evil" origins, its foundation outside of natural law or "justice" (*Peterburgskii tekst*, 47).

By erasing each of Peter's meticulously wrought chapters of creation in turn, the rebellious elements of the flood have effectively destabilized that which he produced, at least temporarily. Meanwhile, Pushkin associates his unlikely rebel Evgeny so strongly with the river that his one-man revolt will become linked by association with the unraveling of Peter's Word.

Throughout the poem, the Neva is "anthropomorphized as Evgeny," as Rosenshield observes, until the two become "linguistically and thematically aligned":[82] both the river and Evgeny represent subjugated elements in Peter's new Russian order; while both initially "accept" their limits and captivity, they will later rise up in mutiny against their common captor. At the opening of part 1, the river tosses in her bed—"Neva metalas´, kak bol´noi / V svoei postele bespokoinoi" (138; Neva was tossing like a sick man / In his unrestful bed)—prefiguring her imminent revolt; meanwhile, Evgeny lies in his own bed, tossing in turmoil (*v volnen´i*; 139). Over the course of their respective rebellions, each will progress from a horizontal to a vertical state, as they literally rise up against captivity: the river rises and "stands" over the islands—"Vstavali volny tam i zlilis´" (142; Rose up the billows there and raged)—just as, a year later, Evgeny will awaken, spring to his feet, and stand just before his own revolt (147). The defiance of each is associated with the root *serd-*, or heart: the rain beats angrily at the window ("*Serd*ito bilsia dozhd´ v okno" [138; Angrily the rain beat on the window; all emphases mine]) in the opening scene, just as Evgeny gives a heartfelt sigh ("vzdokhnul *serd*echno"; 139) and dreams about his future with Parasha. Later on, his own rebellion will likewise be ignited in the heart: "Po *serd*tsu plamen´ probezhal" (148; Flame ran over his heart); following his doomed confrontation, he will press his hand to his heart as if to relieve the passions that first led him to rise up. The resentful hostility (*zloba*) ascribed to the elements in the Prologue bubbles up during the flood: "Buntuia *zlobno* vkrug nego" (147; Rioting viciously about him). This same ancient fury possesses Evgeny at the moment of his own revolt: "Shepnul on, *zlobno* zadrozhav" (148; He whispered with a shudder of spite). Similarly, both the waters of the Neva and the blood in Evgeny's veins boil at the moment of revolt: "Eshche *kipeli* zlobno volny, / Kak by pod nimi tlel ogon´" (143; The waves still seethed angrily, / As if beneath them fire were glowing); "*Vskipela* krov´" (148; His blood seethed).

Following the flood, the mad Evgeny is further associated with the raging river both physically and linguistically: he abandons his apartment (which is described as *pustynnyi* [desolate, deserted], like the river's original home) and wanders aimlessly through the space of the capital, as the untamed river once did. While the retreating Neva is likened to an invader, absconding to the noise of "bran´, trevoga, voi!" (143; cursing, panic, howls!), Evgeny is deafened by his own inner anxiety: " On oglushen / Byl

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[82] Rosenshield, *Genres of Madness,* 137.

shumom vnutrennei *trevogi*" (146; He was deafened / By the rushing noise of anxious inner turmoil). Both are depicted in bestial terms: the maddened river throws herself upon the city "kak *zver´*" (140; like a beast), while the madman is degraded to "ni *zver´* ni chelovek" (146; neither beast nor man). The following autumn, the sullen Neva once again threatens to overflow its embankment: "*Mrach*nyi val / Pleskal na pristan´" (146; A sullen tide / Splashed the embankment); that same night, just before his climactic confrontation, Evgeny assumes the river's sullen aspect before the Horseman: "On *mrach*en stal / Pred gordelivym istukanom" (148; Scowling he stood / Before the prideful statue). The river bubbles and swirls before pouncing on the city, "kotlom klokocha i klubuias´" (140; gurgling and welling up like a cauldron), just as Evgeny circles the Horseman's pedestal before hurling his curse: "Krugom podnozhiia kumira / Bezumets bednyi oboshel" (147; Round about the Idol's pedestal / The poor deranged man walked). Throughout the poem, the river is strongly associated with the word *vozmushchenie* (rebellion, insurrection): waves rise like mountains "iz *vozmushchennoi* glubiny" (142; from the stirred-up deeps); the Idol stands before Evgeny "nad *vozmushchennoiu* Nevoiu" (142; over the tumultuous Neva); the sated Neva draws back, "svoim liubuias´ *vozmushchen´em*" (143; reveling in the turmoil she had made). When Evgeny fails to lift his "confused" eyes to the Horseman following the confrontation—"*smushchennykh* glaz ne podimal" (149; would not lift up his abashed eyes)—the cognate carries similar associations with disturbance and trouble. Following their respective mutinies, both "elements" of Peter's creation become at least nominally subdued: after the flood Evgeny runs toward the "edva *smir*ivsheisia reke" (143; barely calmed-down river); later, following his own mutiny, he presses his hand to his chest, "kak by ego *smir*iaia muku" (as if soothing its agony). The cyclical pattern to the river's uprising, however, suggests that her submission—and, by extension, Evgeny's—will be short-lived. Through extensive linguistic and metaphorical association, Evgeny's subversive threat has been revealed to be fully capable of destabilizing Peter's creative Logos, just as the river once "undid" his creation narrative. Little wonder, then, that the embattled Peter must descend from his pedestal to keep Evgeny's new Word from destroying His, just as the God of Job was forced to "restabilize" his own cosmos in response to Job's insolent curse.

In the artificial cosmos of Petersburg, engendered through the creative Logos of Peter, Evgeny's words are elevated to performativity, their very pronouncement generating action.[83] Like Job's curse to the Creator, Evgeny's threat becomes a defying Word, a sort of anti-Logos, demanding re-

[83] For an excellent discussion of the performativity of language in *The Bronze Horseman*, see Rosenshield, *Genres of Madness*, 117.

sponse.[84] Peter is compelled to abandon his elevated position in order to prevent Evgeny's own destructive Word from coming to fruition. In Job, God reappropriates the Word from his unruly servant through his authoritative speech from the whirlwind. In contrast, Peter proves unable to recapture the purloined Word from his subject: it is Evgeny who pronounces the final words of the poem ("Uzho tebe"), transferring verbal power from creator to creature.[85] Although Evgeny dies, he has effectively appropriated the creative Logos from Peter.[86]

Peter's divine aspirations—his artificial imposition of order over nature—inadvertently beget the double rebellion depicted in *The Bronze Horseman*, one by river, one by clerk. And although the floodwaters abate, and the mad clerk signals his submission, the poem insinuates the lingering mutiny of these two unruly elements; after all, the environmental conditions that initiated the flood recur yearly, as indicated by the rising waves and spitting rain that return the following fall. Throughout the poem, a howling wind (*voi*) heralds the insurgence of the subjugated elements. The wind begins to blow early in part 1—"i veter dul, pechal´no voia" (138; and the wind blew, dismally howling); "Chtob veter vyl ne tak unylo" (140; wished / The wind would not howl so dismally)—disturbing Evgeny's dreams and signaling the oncoming flood. The howls gleefully accompany the flood as it devastates the city—"Kak veter, buino zabyvaia" (142; the wind, wildly howling); "Tam buria vyla" (142; There howled the

[84] Rosenshield labels curses, threats, and challenges "negative performatives" (ibid.).

[85] Ibid.

[86] Although Evgeny's inarticulateness makes him an unusual standard-bearer for the Word, it is clear that Peter recognizes something in his challenger's words with enough power to destabilize an empire. Merezhkovsky envisioned the collapse of the entire Petrine era of Russian culture, as generations of Russian writers would take up the battle cry of Pushkin's madman, "etot vyzov malykh velikomu, etot bogokhul´nyi krik vozmutivsheisia cherni" (this challenge from the small to the great, this blasphemous cry of an outraged mob). D. S. Merezhkovskii, "Pushkin," in *Vechnye sputniki* (1879; repr., Moscow: Respublika, 1995), 396. Some recent critics echo Merezhkovsky, identifying in Evgeny's words a threat potent enough to goad Peter from his pedestal (Bethea, "The Role of the Eques," 117; see n. 52). In Rosenshield's reading, Evgeny's words become Word, a destructive—and equally powerful—counterpart to Peter's own, impossible to ignore: "The Bronze Horseman heeds Evgenii because his voice is prophetic. […] It is a new Word, and that is why Peter must listen" (*Genres of Madness*, 117). In all of these readings, the Horseman is compelled to heed Evgeny's threat in order to protect his own legacy; for in his brief words lies the possibility that Peter's shining monument, his city, will forever be associated with the dark side of the Petrine idea: the steep natural and human costs of world-building, and the resulting, unavoidable rebellions, both ecological and political.

storm)—continuing even as the waters recede ("Nasil′e, bran′, trevoga, voi!"). A year later, the rain and winds return to remind Evgeny of the devastation, and of his personal loss: "Dozhd′ kapal, veter vyl unylo" (146; Rain dripped, the wind was howling mournfully). It is this memory of the catastrophe that finally prompts Evgeny's own rebellion, and the howling wind is the final sound Evgeny hears before he hurls his curse at the bronze *kumir*. Perhaps it is no coincidence that this endless howl, the sole voice of nature's rebellion, bears a near inversion of Job's Russian name: *Iov/voi* (*Иов/Вой*). The wailing winds in the poem variously disturb the complacent Evgeny, tear at him during the flood, wake him up on the embankment, and rekindle the memory of his loss. In a sense, then, it is the very echoes of Job's ancient rebellion that awaken and incite Evgeny to revolt. The recurrence of a volatile atmosphere in part 2 of the poem clearly implies that the disruption of order will not end with the flood or with Evgeny; rather, the periodic return of "flood conditions" in the capital will, each time, give rise to human rebellion. And whenever the rising wind signals a coming flood, the challenge of the Old Testament's most famous rebel—his name encoded in the wind's lament—will resonate in the rebellion of Petersburg's artificially subjugated elements, both natural and human.

Enriched by the ancient Job subtext, Evgeny's rebellion—often read as a political stand against despotism, the disenfranchised little man rising futilely against the powerful state[87]—becomes something akin to theomachy. Ultimately, the battle over the creative Word emerges as a central drama of *The Bronze Horseman*: while the impostor-God Peter speaks the new world of Petersburg into being, his subject's curse is powerful enough to destabilize this already shaky Cosmos. By revealing his Creator's vulnerability, Evgeny appropriates some of Peter's power; both literally and figuratively, Evgeny voices the final word in the poem. The clerk is also aided by an unlikely source: the winds that howl (*voi*) through the streets of Petersburg bear the ancient spirit—and name—of the rebel Job (*Iov*), breathing rebellion into the suppressed elements of Peter's demonic new world order.

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[87] Several critics, for example, have discerned in the poem an allegorical commentary on the Decembrist uprising. See D. D. Blagoi, *Sotsiologiia tvorchestva Pushkina: Etiudy* (Moscow: Federatsiia, 1929), 308–28; I. B. Borev, *Iskusstvo interpretatsii i otsenki: Opyt prochteniia Mednogo vsadnika* (Moscow: Sovetskii pisatel′, 1981), 282–92. An awareness of the Joban parallels enhances our understanding and appreciation of the disenfranchised Evgeny's conflict with the state, as embodied in the statue.