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© Sergey A. KOMAROV  
eleshenka@yandex.ru

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### **THE FIRST CENSORED EDITION OF THE "RUSSIAN TALE" BY PETR P. ERSHOV "THE LITTLE HUMPBACED HORSE": SOURCES AS A FACTOR OF THE AUTHOR'S INTENTIONS**

*SUMMARY. In this article for the first time, the biblical axiological and figurative bases of the text of the first censored edition of Ershov's literary fairy tale "The Little Humpbacked Horse" come to light in detail, the most significant layer of these signs is described. The author of the article offers a concept of the historico-philosophical nature of the young Siberian writer's creation. Ershov's dialogical polemic with Pushkin's texts is considered as a design feature of the genre and a substantial solution of an esthetic task. The age and educational and professional choice of the nineteen-year-old student of the imperial university are defined in the article as essential reference points of the reconstruction of the plan of the fairy tale. The priority of knowledge of the biblical text is considered as the natural standard of culture of the Russian gymnasium, university and spiritual and civil education in aggregate with known religious and personal tendencies of the artist. The author of the article proceeds from the thought of the popularity of Ershov's fairy tale in Russia as the natural vehicle for a valuable and figurative system of biblical perception of the world in democratically wide layers of the orthodox reading country, as one of sources of maintenance of its religious and spiritual system over nearly two centuries. In the coincidence of the artistic message of Ershov's fairy tale with the matrix bases of the Russian mass reader's religious consciousness, we can see along with other factors, a secret of the steady popularity of this text which has really become the national fairy tale.*

*KEY WORDS. Literary fairy tale, plan, sources, Bible, Ershov, Pushkin, Ablesimov.*

Let us recall a famous letter by Ershov to A.K. Yaroslavtsev written in November 1843: "... they reproach me, because there are no sententiae for the children in my fairy tale. And they think my fairy tale is for children. Oh yes, Pushkin and Zhukovsky were much simpler, they considered "The Little Humpbacked Horse" more than a didactic story for children" [1; 101]. Here we can see a key to a concept of the fairy

tale: a) it is not written for the children; b) it has something that only a highly cultured adult consciousness can understand; c) it contains a certain well-defined, generally valid message, perceived by the author; d) this message was understood by the greatest figures of Russian culture. That means it can be understood from the text. Ershov knew it, he was sure that the problem was with the culture and outlook of the reader. And our task today is to be up to the task of what the nineteen-year-old philosophy student was expecting from the reader.

We believe that there are at least three major literary sources and several accompanying sources in the fairy tale "The Little Humpbacked Horse". The major sources are: 1) two works by Pushkin ("Ruslan and Ludmila" and "The Tale of Tsar Saltan"), 2) the Old and the New Testament, 3) the ballad opera "The miller who was a wizard, a cheat and a matchmaker".

Pushkin's tale of Tsar Saltan was written in late August 1831, and for the first time it was published in the third part of the book "Poems" in 1832. Apparently, Ershov's idea of the tale began to advance from the moment of publication of that book in late March 1832. We think so, because from our point of view this fairy tale has the code details of the character-creation system of Ershov's text. But for some reason, until now these details have not been observed by specialists.

The turning, and accordingly, key point of the plot in Pushkin's tale is a message received by Saltan that his "wife, the queen, has borne at night neither a son nor daughter, neither a mouse nor a frog, but has given birth to an unknown little creature", though in fact "God gave them a son as tall as an arshin [28 inches]" (which means he was "lusty, large of limb, and fair") [2; 431]. Here is important the combination of four lexical items: "has born at night", "unknown little creature", "as an arshin", "God gave them". In Ershov's fairy tale, Ivan meets at night with a white mare which is a part of the supernatural powers. As a result, a "little unknown creature" horse is born that "has a height of three vershoks", "has ears an arshin long" and "has two humps". The phrase "neither a mouse nor a frog" is a reference to the antique tradition of the story "The Battle of Frogs and Mice" and also to the antique tradition of the description of animals, for example "the golden ass". All this must be taken into account when we talk about the idea of "The Little Humpbacked Horse".

We should also mention the two important details in Pushkin's text, which are both in the introduction to the tale. Ershov indirectly accounts for them. The first detail is the comic element of the introduction: "During all the conversation the Tsar was just beyond the fence" [2; 429]. The second is the preplanned time of birth: "And, ere next September's done / See that you bear me a son" [2; 430]. In Ershov's tale the brothers guard the corn approximately at the same time. Moreover, before Ivan's turn to guard his middle brother "all night long, bereft of sense / He walked round his neighbour's fence [3; 13]. And before the last trial of Ivan, that is, to bathe in the cauldrons, "fence" reappears in the comic context: "He said a prayer to the fence and went to the Tsar to the court-yard" [3; 158].

From the point of view of Ivan's brothers, the "unknown little creature" is a "devil under him", that is why Gavriilo said "Saints be with us all this night! / Save us, Lord...

" [3; 39]. But, apparently, the Little Horse considers himself to be a part of the anti-demonic powers: "Once I get into my pace / Any demon I'll outrace" [3; 35]. The mare that was tamed by Ivan and who gave a birth to the little horse "whiter was than whitest snow". But the first moment the main character sees her, he has an inner monologue and emotively calls her a "locust": "Trifling never was my line / And I'll jump upon your spine, / Nasty little locust!" [3; 19, 21]. To tame the mare, Ivan "mounted on her in a trice", "landed on her with a smack /back to front and front to back", and "seized her tail as in a vice" [3; 21]. On the one hand, it is a comic situation where the heroism of Ivan seems to be mocked. However, trying to throw the hero off, running "in the fields, in the mountains and forests" the mare tests him seriously.

In the first chapter of the Book of Zechariah, there is a possible motivation for the emergence of a white mare in the night field of earthly space, so that is why the mare meets Ivan. Prophet Zechariah tells about a vision given to him by God of a rider on a red horse. Behind the rider there were "red horses, bay horses and white horses". These are the messengers of God, "these are they whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth" (the Book of Zechariah, 1; 8–10). These messengers "have walked... the earth", i.e. they had done the errand of the Almighty, and reported to the Angel: "all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest". However, that was what made the Lord angry, because the one who lives still is increasing the evil (the Book of Zechariah, 1; 11, 15). So there is an obvious principle link between evil and rest, evil and sleep, and that means that awaking and movement are positive, they are pleasing to God. In this context, the "white mare" can be considered as one of those who had been sent by God to earth, to the people, those who could be seen as a night vision in the nocturnal space. In addition, at the beginning of the first chapter of the Book, there is a topic very important for Ershov, considering his dispute with Pushkin's "The Tale of Tsar Saltan". This topic can be called "the wrong faith of the fathers": "Be ye not as your fathers" (the Book of Zechariah 1; 4). We shall recall that at the beginning of the tale there is a rupture of relations between generations, between the father and the son (Saltan and Gvidon). Saltan is businesslike but credulous, he trusts people, he doesn't believe in in fate that gave him his family and happy progeny. In other words, in the work by Pushkin there is a phenomenon of faith in fathers. But Ershov polemically removes this problematic, developing the theme of faith in youth (Ivan), which means taking care of the father and brothers, and showing mercy to the latter, and hence the right, healthy premise of faith, its strengthening and growth.

In this context, the lexeme "locust" may be semantically divided into two. It expresses the main character's peasant consciousness's estimate of the culprit who damaged the crops. And it expresses his confidence that a toiler will win and destroy any locust.

But the image of the locust is in the first place a biblical image, and it is connected particularly with the image of a horse. In the Book of Job (chapter 39) we can see such lines as: "What time she lifteth up herself on high, she scorneth the horse and his rider. Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?"

Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? the glory of his nostrils is terrible. He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men. He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted. . .” (the Book of Job, 39; 18-22). This chapter begins with the theme of the birth of the animals. However, in the Book of Revelation there is another image of a locust. It is connected with a horse and appears when the fourth seal is opened and there is a vision of a horse and a rider: “And the shapes of the locusts were like unto horses prepared unto battle; and on their heads were as it were crowns like gold, and their faces were as the faces of men. And they had hair as the hair of women, and their teeth were as the teeth of lions. And they had breastplates, as it were breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was as the sound of chariots of many horses running to battle. And they had tails like unto scorpions, and there were stings in their tails: and their power was to hurt men five months” (the Book of Revelation, 9; 7-9).

We think that it is possible to assume that the combination of the features of donkey, camel and horse in the form of a Humpbacked Horse is modeled by the author according to a biblical model. Secondly, it is possible to assume that it is built as an inverted and positive model that has anti-demonic nature. It is no coincidence that the appearance of the black horse during the opening of the third seal is accompanied by the presence of a measure of wheat in the rider’s hand (the Book of Revelation, 6; 6). In chapter 13 of Revelation you can find another example of the animal that is of a mixed type and of diabolical nature: “And the beast which I saw was like unto a leopard, and his feet were as the feet of a bear, and his mouth as the mouth of a lion: and the dragon gave him his power, and his seat, and great authority”; “And it was given unto him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them: and power was given him over all kindreds, and tongues, and nations” (The Book of Revelation, 13; 2, 7). The student Ershov created his Little Horse according to this pattern as a positive alternative that will come into spiritual contact with the Russian folk hero.

The theme of patrol, night watch and anti-sleep in the tale is a biblical theme; this theme is of the opening up the truth to a man, of a revelation. So it is no surprise that Ivan’s brothers fall asleep and miss the significant meeting, while Ivan is ready for it. So who appears before the eyes of a man according to John the Apostle? An old man appears, that has hair white like wool and as white as snow; “and his eyes were as a flame of fire” (the Book of Revelation, 1; 14).

Ershov depicts the stage of the opening of the first seal, but stops as if to invite us to follow the biblical characters: “Come and see”. This is the first stage: “And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer” (The Book of Revelation, 6; 2). That is the way of Ivan. From Ivan-the-Fool, who rides a horse backwards holding the mare by the tail, to a royal rider, hero and conqueror.

The final model is focused on the biblical image of the reigning peasant who is likened to the Son of Man from chapter 14 of John’s Revelation: “And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle” (The Book of Revelation,

14; 14). In chapter 19 there is an image of a rider on a white horse who "in righteousness [...] doth judge and make war", and whose "name is called The Word of God" (the Book of Revelation, 19; 11-15). In other words, Ershov develops the folk hero in an image prospective that has been already developed in the Bible.

The message of Ivan about the destiny of the unearthly daughter is very important for the last trial of the folk hero. That is because the result of this was the change of the alternation of day and night. This plot device was apparently borrowed by the student Ershov from the Bible. In the Book of Jeremiah (chapter 33) we can see: "Thus saith the Lord; If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season"; "Thus saith the Lord; If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth..." (The Book of Jeremiah, 33; 20, 25).

In the tale of Ershov, the word *gusli* (the oldest Russian multi-string plucked musical instrument, which also can be called a harp in English) is frequently mentioned (in all, 5 times). The *gusli* is an attribute of Tsar-Maiden, i.e. the future wife of Ivan, which means that she is his main reward, she is his good fortune. We shall recall that in the Revelation of John during the opening of the first seal, every one of four and twenty elders had "harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints" (the Book of Revelation, 5; 8), "the harps of God" are mentioned during the overcoming of a catastrophe (The Book of Revelation, 15; 2), because exactly "the redeemed from the earth" could learn the divine song, in which are "harpers harping with their harps" (the Book of Revelation, 14; 2-5). The unredeemed from the earth won't hear "the voice of harpers" (the Book of Revelation, 18; 22). So the biblical text fills the attributes of *gusli* with a special meaning, denoting the meeting of Ivan with Tsar-Maiden as a fatefully divine meeting, because the Maiden's home is made by the storyteller in a very religious projection: "Stars upon the palace spire, / Burning with a holy fire, / Formed a Christian Cross, whose rays/ Set the heavens all ablaze" [3, 121].

At the moment, the genesis of such a character as a "Monster-Marvel Whale" is qualified by all major experts as folklore. I. P. Lupanova states authoritatively that the problem of the origin of this character has been solved: "The researchers who tried to find out the folklore sources of 'The Little Humpbacked Horse' claim absolutely correctly that the "Monster-Marvel Whale" is purely folklore in origin"; "But we cannot find anything like the whale kingdom in any folk tale of the 'Humpbacked Horse' type" [4; 238-239]. It is worth mentioning that Ershov takes the image of the whale from the Bible. And it is the specific connotations that explain the status of this character in the system of characters and its place in the text of the fairy tale.

For example, a "great sea creature" (a "whale" in the Russian translation of the Bible) is depicted in the Book of Jonah. It was sent by God and swallowed Jonah, who disobeyed God's will: "And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. / Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly"; "And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land" (The Book of Jonah 2; 1-2, 11). It is well known that Jonah is a special character in the structure

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of the Bible. It is no coincidence that there is a direct link, a direct parallel between Jonah and the Son of Man in the two Gospels of the New Testament (the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke). Also, there is the onliness of the sign of God, given to an evil and adulterous generation through Jonah. Let us recall the text of the Bible: "But he answered and said unto them, an evil adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall be no sign; and there shall no sign be given it but the sign of Jonah the prophet: for as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale; so shall the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew, 12; 39-40). "This generation is a wicked generation; it asks for a sign. And no sign will be given it except the sign of Jonah. For just as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also the Son of Man will be to this generation (Luke, 11; 29-30). The fact is that Jonah stands out from all the prophets and is said by the New Testament to be very close to the Lord. For Ershov, this fact meant that all the circumstances of the life story of this biblical character are special. Jonah is connected with a whole system of motives, developed in the tale by Ershov. Firstly, there is the motive of sleep, because "Jonah had gone below deck, where he lay down and fell into a deep sleep". Secondly, there is the motive of the ship (Ershov's whale swallows thirty ships). The motive of sailors and shipmasters is also very important because it is they who are the link between the Saltan and Gvidon in the text that Ershov constantly keeps in mind. Thirdly, there is the motive of ignorance. The whale doesn't know why it was punished, so it asks Ivan and the Little Horse to find it out in the "solar kingdom". Fourthly, there is the motive of mercy (God lets Jonah go and forgives the city, Moon Moonovich forgives the whale, the Little Humpbacked Horse has a mercy on the peasants who live on the whale, Ivan forgives his brothers for deceit and theft, Saltan forgives Tsaritsa's sisters for deceit and separation). In the end of the first part of the tale, the narrator tells us about Ivan's future merits: "How the Sun, at his request, / Gave the Monster Whale his rest; / One more deed, but not the least, / How he thirty ships released" [3; 55]. It is no coincidence that the name Jonah is translated as "dove" and the dove is traditionally the sign of the soul. In addition, the similarity of spatial situations in the three texts is quite obvious (the ship consumes sleeping Jonah, the whale swallows Jonah, Gvidon and his mother are in a barrel floating in the sea, the whale swallows ships). This is undoubtedly very important for Ershov in terms of plot construction and semantics.

We have already mentioned the fact that the three parts of the Russian fairy tale "The Little Humpbacked Horse" are arranged by the author in accordance with the philosophical-historical concept of Nikolai Nadezhdin. This concept was outlined in his article "The difference between Classical and Romantic poetry, understandable from their origin," published by the Moscow magazine "Athenaeum" in January 1830 [5]. Nadezhdin describes in his article the scheme of development of human civilization. According to this scheme there are "three main points, around which there is the entire sphere of human life": "a) the natural state; b) the civil state; c) the religious state". Two principles interact differently in each of these states. These principles are Nature and the Human Spirit. Ivan is the embodiment of the Human

Spirit in its national form. While Moon Moonovich, the Sun, and their daughter the Tsar-Maiden, the white mare and the Little Humpbacked Horse are the signs of Nature that lead Ivan, his Spirit. And they lead through him the Spirit of Russia to a higher state of Son of Man in the orthodox version.

We have already mentioned that the author of "The Little Humpbacked Horse" uses deliberately a direct reference to the comic opera of Ablesimov [6]. However, we should explain why the author had to use such an obvious and clear pointer to this literary source. This play was published as a separate publication in the capital in 1831. The trochaic tetrameter is not the only reason, but also the special naïve folk hero Filimon. With fear he can "shout with all his might", he can "sing in a voice" and he "ends in a wild voice" [7; 196]. This song is a Russian folk song "A young lad was walking" ("Как ходил, гулял молодчик"). The same song is in the fairy tale by Ershov. This character was searching for two runaway horses "savrasko and gnedko" (the brown and the bay horses), he met a miller, who solved all his problems with marriage. The miller through manipulation and intrigue helps him to marry his beloved Anna. The difference between the peasants and the nobility seems to be reduced in the plot of the opera, because Anna's mother has a noble background, and the daughter has married a peasant. The phenomenon of the smallholder (in Russian "однодворец") is very important for Ershov. The miller formulates it in the song: "In Russia the smallholder is a landowner, and he is a peasant / he is a slave and he is a lord, / himself he plows, himself he screams / A gentleman, and a farmer — all rolled into one". Mother Fetinya is also pleased: "Because my daughter will marry not a peasant, but she will marry a half-noble man" [7; 218, 219].

Thus, for Ershov it was important to justify the transition from the first part of the tale to the second one. The transition from the peasant position to the noble one, and then to the Tsar position. The author wanted to remove the social antagonism within the cultural hero, and he did so by a reference to the widely known source, references to the hero already recognizable by the reader. So the comic opera of Ablesimov became such a source. It had been successfully performed on the imperial stage for more than fifty years, and its text was acknowledged in authoritative literary circles (for example, A.F. Merzlyakov). Thus, in the basis of the character there is a work by another author that corresponds to the concept of Ershov: the concept of transition from the natural state to the civil one and then to the religious one. He needed a general image of a Russian man, who could grow spiritually by the end of the tale, without coming into conflict with the enlarged biblical imagery.

It is worth noting that Ershov created a special quasi-historical world. The author plays with the names and ranks of administrative agencies, judicial institutions; he plays with episodes that obviously recall the well-known facts of Russian history. [8] Student Ershov so to say used to the fullest his three-year university education (he studied at the philosophical and law faculties), as well as his reading of the "History of the Russian State" by N.M. Karamzin.

The idea of the fairy tale was undoubtedly inspired by the approaching 850th anniversary of the Christianization of Russia.

It is no coincidence that the works of Ershov that were written before “The Little Humpbacked Horse” show a historical and national preoccupation: “The Monologue of Svyatopolk the Accursed”, “Death of Svyatoslav”, “Death of Ermak”, “The Song of the Cossack” and “Russian bayonet”. It is also no coincidence that immediately after writing the tale, in October 1834, Ershov created a great poetic text called “The Christmas Night”. Studying the “Law of God” in the gymnasium and university, and even the kind of earnest fanatic faith which is embodied in his epistolary heritage — all these factors are reasons for the emergence of biblical imagery in Ershov’s works. There is a very remarkable detail recorded in the memoirs of his fellow student A.K. Yaroslavtsov: Ershov often retreated to read “all literary and religious books”, “but the religious books, which he loved to read, he tried to conceal from others” [1, 12-13, 18].

Pushkin’s poem “Ruslan and Ludmila” gave Russian poetry a “great form” of national and historical genre [9, 135-140], in which the various genres were synthesized (fairy tale, heroic poem, etc.). Undoubtedly it was inspiring for Ershov. Ershov was in competition with Pushkin and opposed Ivan and Ruslan. He was too interested in the epoch of Vladimir and the time of the Christianization of Russia. Pushkin’s happy ending, where the father takes his daughter and Ruslan in his arms, was not just a ritual, but was denoting the spiritual and historical perspective of the country. The theme of the family reunion is the basis of “The Tale of Tsar Saltan”. The continuity of generations is very important here. But there is a different problematic and thematic basis in the fairy tale of Ershov, because all family matters are happily and graciously solved in the first part of the tale.

The Little Humpbacked Horse combines the signs of East and West, North and South, it combines the properties of a horse, a donkey, a camel and a bird. The universal spirit embodied in the friendship of the Little Horse and its owner helps to create the idea of a collective folk myth. Therefore, soon after the creation of the “Little Humpbacked Horse”, Ershov had an idea to create ten books and a hundred songs about Ivan Tsarevich. In other words, he was excited by the idea of the development of the figure of national hero. But, unfortunately, this idea remained only a dream.

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