

Title: Provincial Family Portraits and the Influence of Hellmouth on the Portraiture of Dogs
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There are many examples, particularly in the art museums of provincial Russian cities, of family portraits painted by anonymous artists who were most likely talented household serfs lacking the conventional academic training in painting, but commissioned, perhaps with minimal training or some professional examples to copy, to paint the family's portraits. The shortcomings in their technique are not always simple amateurishness; in some cases they suggest training in icon-painting underlying the attempt to copy European techniques of portraiture. A frequent subject in such paintings is a child accompanied by a dog. Careful examination of the dog can reveal awkwardly rendered details, ranging from teeth to the number of toes, which are strikingly reminiscent of features of creatures that appear in icons, especially the beast at the mouth of hell. I will show that when such 'untrained' provincials were recruited to imitate European-style portraiture, they brought to the task either some actual training in icon schools, or an extensive knowledge of the conventions of icon-painting.