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## Anton P. Chekhov and Mikhail A. Bulgakov: Chekhov's trace in "The Master and Margarita"

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**Abstract.** The research examines the presence of A.P. Chekhov's works in M.A. Bulgakov's novel "The Master and Margarita". It is established that Bulgakov drew inspiration from Chekhov's principles, particularly those outlined in Chekhov's "Autobiography", when depicting medical events in his novel. This is evident, for example, in the poisoning episode involving the main characters. It is demonstrated that Chekhov's story "The Black Monk" greatly influenced the creation of the main and supporting characters in "The Master and Margarita", additionally the climactic Great Ball at Satan's. Both Chekhov's story and Bulgakov's novel offer rational explanations to the characters' mental disorders; however, these explanations are not exhaustive, allowing room for the mystical elements in the plots.

**Keywords:** novel, short story, image genesis, motif, character, tradition

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## М.А. Булгаков и А.П. Чехов: чеховский след в «Мастере и Маргарите»

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**Аннотация.** Рассматривается отражение в романе М.А. Булгакова «Мастер и Маргарита» произведений А.П. Чехова. Доказывается, что Булгаков в изображении событий, связанных с медициной, руководствовался принципами, сформулированными Чеховым в «Автобио-

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графии», что, в частности, проявилось в эпизоде отравления главных героев романа. Демонстрируется, что рассказ Чехова «Черный монах» оказал значительное влияние на создание главных героев и персонажей «Мастера и Маргариты», а также на такую ключевую сцену, как Великий бал у сатаны. Как в рассказе Чехова, так и в романе Булгакова присутствует рациональное объяснение происходящего, связанное с психическим расстройством героев, но оно не является исчерпывающим и оставляет место для мистических сюжетов.

**Ключевые слова:** роман, рассказ, генезис образа, мотив, персонаж, традиция

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## Introduction

It is well known that A.P. Chekhov was one of the favorite writers of M.A. Bulgakov. As Mikhail Afanasyevich's second wife Lyubov E. Belozerskaya recalled, "Bulgakov loved Chekhov, but not with the fanatical love peculiar to some Czechov's scholars, but with some kind of affectionate love, as they love a good, intelligent older brother" (Belozerskaya, 1990, p. 142). A number of studies are devoted to the topic of "Bulgakov and Chekhov" (see for example: Lakshin, 1989, vol. 1, pp. 29–30, 63–67; Vilensky et al., 1995, pp. 50–74; Varenichenko, Nikipelova, 1997, pp. 37–44; Stepanov, 1999, pp. 35–37; Smelyansky, 1989; Sangye, 2016). However, the reflection of Chekhov's ideas and works in Bulgakov's most significant creation – the novel "The Master and Margarita" has not yet been subjected to special research.

## Discussion

### *How the master and Margarita were poisoned*

Chekhov believed that "the conditions of artistic creativity do not always allow full agreement with scientific data; it is impossible to mimic death from poison on stage as it actually happens. But agreement with scientific data should be felt in this convention, that is, it should be clear to the reader or viewer that this is only a convention and that he is dealing with a competent writer" (Chekhov, 1987, pp. 271–272). Bulgakov followed this Chekhov principle in his last novel.

Here is how the poisoning of the main characters of "The Master and Margarita" is described:

"They sniffed the wine, poured it into glasses, looked through it at the light in the window disappearing before the storm. They saw how everything turned the color of blood.

– Woland's health! Margarita exclaimed, raising her glass.

All three put their lips to the glasses and drank a large mouthful. Immediately, the pre-storm light began to fade in the master's eyes, his breath caught, he felt that the end was coming. He also saw how deathly pale Margarita, helplessly

stretching out her arms to him, dropped her head on the table, and then slipped to the floor.

– The poisoner... – the master still managed to shout. He wanted to grab a knife from the table to stab Azazello with it, but his hand helplessly slipped off the tablecloth, everything surrounding the master in the basement turned black, and then completely disappeared. He fell backwards and, falling, cut the skin on his temple on the corner of the bureau board.”

Further, Azazello sees how in Margarita's mansion “a gloomy woman, waiting for her husband's return, came out of her bedroom, suddenly turned pale, clutched her heart and shouted helplessly:

– Natasha! Anyone... to me! – fell on the floor in the living room before reaching the office” (Bulgakov, 2006, p. 914).

It is clear that the master and Margarita were poisoned with potassium cyanide. In particular, Bulgakov took into account that potassium cyanide is almost insoluble in ethanol, but it dissolves well in wine. The heroes first drink three glasses of cognac, but Azazello dissolves the poison in wine. In the first full handwritten edition, completed in 1937, this poison was called directly, though not in relation to the main characters. Woland said to the barman Sokov: “Wouldn't it be better to arrange a feast for these 27 thousand and, having taken potassium cyanide, move to the sounds of strings, surrounded by drunken beauties and dashing friends?” (Bulgakov, 2006, pp. 517–518). In the final text of the novel, the name of the poison is never mentioned.

It is well known that potassium cyanide has the smell of bitter almonds. When poisoning the master and Margarita, this smell is not mentioned. But there is a mention of almonds in the text of the novel. In the early edition, in the scene of the barman's visit to a Bad apartment, “something hissed and clicked by the burning fireplace – Fiello (the future Azazello. – *B.S.*) was frying almonds, and two in a crimson column of flame were drinking vodka” (Bulgakov, 2006, p. 171). In the first completed handwritten edition of 1937 at the Satan's Great Ball at “crystal tables were littered with grains of roasted almonds,” (Bulgakov, 2006, p. 562) and two negroes “kept piles of almonds on trays” (Bulgakov, 2006, p. 563). In the same edition in the episode in Torgsin, a decent quiet old man, “dressed poorly but cleanly,” before bringing down a tray on the head of a “lilac fat man,” buys three almond cakes (Bulgakov, 2006, p. 626). In the final text there are only three almond cakes, which an old man buys in Torgsin (Bulgakov, 2006, p. 900). The remaining mentions of almonds have been removed.

Bulgakov, following Chekhov's precepts, did not describe all the details of the poisoning of the main characters of the novel. There is no smell of almonds, no redness of the face. It's just that potassium cyanide, like other cyanides, entering the body, prevents the absorption of oxygen by cells. Because of this, there is an increased oxygen content in the blood, it becomes bright red, and at the moment when the poison begins to act and the poisoned person falls into a coma, redness of the skin of the face is observed. With a large dose or when taking poison on an empty stomach, as in the case of the master and Margarita, death occurs almost instantly, and the agony lasts less than a minute. Bulgakov does not describe

the repulsive features of agony, such as profuse salivation, nausea, vomiting, convulsions with urination and defecation.

The master and Margarita also do not have time to feel the fear of death. In the early edition, the faces of the poisoned turned pale: “He took a deep breath and saw that Margarita dropped her glass, turned pale and fell... White as paper, the poet hung his head lifelessly” (Bulgakov, 2006, p. 194). But already in the first full handwritten edition of 1937, where not only the main characters are poisoned, but also Margarita's housekeeper Natasha, nothing is said about the complexion of the poisoned (Bulgakov, 2006, p. 636). But the resurrected master is already with a white face, which is quite logical, since it is implied that by pouring the poisoned wine into his mouth again, Azazello, if we adhere to the “rational” version, had to introduce an antidote (such could be, in particular, sugar). (For the effect of potassium cyanide and available antidotes, see: Trachtenberg, Belousov, 2011, pp. 237–257; Bradbury, 2023, pp. 143–159.) Like Chekhov, Bulgakov solved, first of all, artistic problems, although he tried, if possible, not to contradict the data of science. And in full accordance with the general evolution of the text of the novel, specific examples are veiled in the final version. This also applies to the time of action (direct indications for 1929 are removed), and poisoning of the main characters (the number of associations with cyanide of potassium decreases).

In the final text of the novel, as we have seen, firstly Margarita, having taken poison with wine, turns pale, and then falls dead. Perhaps here is the trace of an unfinished Bulgakov edit. As you know, she stopped on February 13, 1940 on the phrase “So it means that writers are following the coffin?” from the 19th chapter, which opens the 2nd part of the novel, and the terminally ill writer did not have time to reach the episode with the poisoning of the master and Margarita (Bulgakov, 1989, p. 484). But it is possible that Bulgakov deliberately retreated from the clinical picture of cyanide poisoning for the sake of the tradition according to which death is associated with pallor.

There is also a parallel between Chekhov's short story “Ward No. 6” (1892) and Ivan Bezdomy's stay in Stravinsky's clinic. The hero of the story, the former bailiff Ivan Dmitrich Gromov, suffers from persecution mania, and Ivan Bezdomy was diagnosed with schizophrenia, and both writers describe the diseases of their heroes quite accurately, but without unnecessary details. As noted by E.A. Yablokov (Yablokov, 2011), the dialogue between Gromov and Dr. Andrey Yefimych Ragin: “ ‘Let me go,’ Ivan Dmitrich said, and his voice trembled.

– I can't.

– But why? Why?

– Because it's not in my power. Judge, what benefit will you have if I let you go? Go ahead. The citizens or the police will detain you and bring you back” (Chekhov, 1985a, p. 95) had become the source of the dialogue between Professor Stravinsky and the poet Bezdomy:

“– Fyodor Vasilyevich, please discharge citizen Bezdomy to the city. But this room is not occupied, bed linen can be saved. In two hours citizen Bezdomy will be here again. ‘Well,’ he turned to the poet, ‘I will not wish you success, because I do not believe in this success one iota. – See you soon!’ – And he stood up, and his retinue moved.

– On what ground will I be here again? – Ivan asked anxiously.

Stravinsky seemed to be waiting for this question, immediately sat down and began to speak:

– On the ground that as soon as you appear in long johns at the police station and say that you have seen a person who personally knew Pontius Pilate, you will be brought here immediately, and you will find yourself in the same room again” (Bulgakov, 2006, p. 710).

The hero of Chekhov's short story “Fear” (1892) Dmitry Petrovich Silin wondered: “Tell me, my dear, why is it that when we want to tell something scary, mysterious and fantastic, we draw material not from life, but certainly from the world of ghosts and afterlife shadows?”

– The scary thing is that it's unclear.

– And is life clear to you? Tell me: do you understand life more than the afterlife? <...> Our life and the afterlife are equally incomprehensible and scary” (Chekhov, 1985a, p. 90).

In the fair opinion of Evgeniy A. Yablokov, Bulgakov's attitude to the problem of the supernatural is close to this Chekhov quote (Yablokov, 2001, pp. 142–143).

It is to this place in Chekhov's story that the characteristic of Woland's appearance in “The Master and Margarita” goes back: “Two eyes rested on Margarita's face. The right one, with a golden spark at the bottom, drilling anyone to the bottom of the soul, and the left one is empty and black, like a narrow needle ear, like the entrance to a bottomless well of all darkness and shadows” (Bulgakov, 2006, p. 828).

Chekhov and Bulgakov, using their medical education and experience in their literary work, presented episodes related to medicine, guided by the principles formulated by Chekhov in “The Autobiography”. Bulgakov fruitfully applied them in the novel “The Master and Margarita”, combining scientific authenticity with artistry, for which he sometimes sacrificed scientific details.

#### ***How the characters of “The Black Monk” were reflected in “The Master and Margarita”***

Marietta O. Chudakova pointed out a parallel between the “Black Monk”, which is often called Chekhov's only mystical story, and an unfinished Bulgakov poem “Funérailles” (“Funeral”), dated December 28, 1930 (Chudakova, 1988, pp. 450–451). On April 14, 1932, Bulgakov wrote to his friend Pavel S. Popov: “Quite recently, a person close to me comforted me with a prediction that when I would soon die and call, no one would come to me except the Black Monk. Imagine what a coincidence. Even before this prediction, this story stuck in my head (Bulgakov, 1997, p. 268).

Indeed, a number of significant textual parallels can be found between “The Black Monk” and “The Master and Margarita”. The description of the house of the gardener Egor Semenovich Pesotsky, most probable, was reflected in the description of Pilate's palace: “Pesotsky's house was huge, with columns, with lions on which the plaster was peeling off, and with a footman at the entrance” (Chekhov, 1985c, p. 226.) In Bulgakov's novel we read: “...on the upper terrace of the garden at two marble white lions guarding the stairs, the procurator and the acting president of the Sanhedrin, the high priest of

the Jews, Joseph Kaifa, met” (Bulgakov, 2006, p. 667). Pilate has his own lackey – a black African slave. And Pesotsky, like Pilate, speaks Latin, anyway, inserts Latin expressions in his articles.

At Pesotsky's “near the house itself, in the yard and in the orchard, which together with the nurseries occupied about ninety acres, it was fun and cheerful even in bad weather” (Chekhov, 1985c, p. 226). In “The Master and Margarita”, Ivan Bezdomny, finding himself in Stravinsky's clinic, sees “a balcony behind the bars of the ward, behind it the bank of a winding river and a cheerful pine forest on its other bank” (Bulgakov, 2006, p. 705). And the flowers grown by Pesotsky turn out to be at Satan's Great Ball: “Such amazing roses, lilies, camellias, such tulips of all kinds of colors, starting from bright white and ending with black as soot, in general, Kovrin did not happen to see such a wealth of flowers as Pesotsky's anywhere else” (Chekhov, 1985c, pp. 226–227). In “The Master and Margarita” “a low wall of white tulips grew in front of Margarita. <...> In the next hall there were no columns, instead there were walls of red, pink, milky-white roses on one side, and on the other – a wall of Japanese terry camellias” (Bulgakov, 2006, p. 835).

In “The Black Monk”, at the first meeting with Tatiana Pesotskaya in the garden after a long separation, Kovrin sings from the opera “Eugene Onegin”: “Onegin, I will not hide, / Madly I love Tatiana...” (Chekhov, 1985c, p. 230), which reads as a hint of the relationship between Onegin and Tatiana. In Pesotsky's garden, a nursery and greenhouses are mentioned (Chekhov, 1985c, pp. 226, 227).

In “The Master and Margarita”, during the visit of Koroviev and Behemoth to the restaurant of the Griboyedov House, Koroviev says, addressing Behemoth, that “amazing things can be expected in the greenhouses of this house, which united under its roof several thousand ascetics who decided to selflessly give their lives to the service of Melpomene, Polyhymnia and Thalia. Can you imagine what a fuss will be made when one of them first presents ‘The Inspector General’ or, at the very worst, ‘Eugene Onegin’ to the reading public!” (Bulgakov, 2006, p. 901). Griboyedov House is ironically compared with the Pesotsky house and garden.

When Kovrin first meets the Black Monk, “he really wanted to tell Tanya and Yegor Semyonich about everything, but he realized that they would probably consider his words to be nonsense, and this would frighten them” (Chekhov, 1985, p. 235). In an early edition of Bulgakov's novel, at the first meeting of Ivan Bezdomny with the master, “according to the guest's conclusion, Ivan is perfectly healthy, but the whole trouble is that Ivan (the guest apologized) is ignorant, and Stravinsky, although a brilliant psychiatrist, made a mistake by accepting the stories Ivan for the delirium of the patient” (Bulgakov, 2006, p. 233).

In one of his articles, Yegor Semenovich is indignant about the “scientific ignorance of our patented gardeners who observe nature from the height of their chairs,” contrasting them with practical gardeners (Chekhov, 1985c, p. 238). In Bulgakov's first complete handwritten version of the novel, Woland complains to Margarita that “I adhere to my grandmother's remedies in the old way, not liking modern patent medicines...” (Bulgakov, 2006, p. 557).

Kovrin takes the mirage of the black monk for a hallucination. Similarly, Woland and his retinue are mistaken for a hallucination by Ivan Bezdomny and

the master, as well as Professor Stravinsky. The master confesses to Woland that, “of course, it would be much calmer to consider you the fruit of a hallucination” (Bulgakov, 2006, p. 852). Kovrin, on the other hand, “it occurred to me that if he alone saw this strange, supernatural monk, then it means that he is ill and has already reached hallucinations,” but calms himself down: “But it's good for me, and I'm not hurting anyone; so there's nothing wrong with my hallucinations” (Chekhov, 1985c, p. 238)

Bulgakov's Margarita comforts the master. She, “looking into his eyes, began to stroke his head.

– How you have suffered, how you have suffered, my poor man! I'm the only one who knows about it. Look, you have gray threads in your head and an eternal crease at your lips! My only one, my darling, don't think about anything! You've had to think too much, and now I'm going to think for you. And I guarantee you, I guarantee that everything will be dazzlingly good!” (Bulgakov, 2006, p. 911). In Chekhov, on the contrary, Kovrin comforts Tanya: “...he willingly stroked her hair and shoulders, shook her hands and wiped her tears... Finally, she stopped crying” (Chekhov, 1985c, p. 240).

The Black Monk convinces Kovrin: “The legend, the mirage and me are all the product of your excited imagination. I am a ghost” (Chekhov, 1985c, p. 241). Stravinsky, a character functionally identical to Woland and Pilate, believes that Bezdomny in the person of Woland “probably saw someone who struck his disordered imagination” (Bulgakov, 2006, p. 695).

The Black Monk sees the justification for Kovrin's existence in following the “eternal truth”: “You are one of those few who are justly called the chosen of God. You serve the eternal truth. <...> You are sick because you worked hard and got tired, which means that you sacrificed your health to the idea and the time is near when you will give your life to it” (Chekhov, 1985c, pp. 241–242). The monk proclaims pleasure as the goal of “eternal life”, and “true pleasure in knowledge” (Chekhov, 1985c, p. 241).

This is also the meaning of the existence of Yeshua and the master. Ha-Nozri admits that “it's easy and pleasant to tell the truth” (Bulgakov, 2006, p. 664). The master absolutely accurately guesses the events that took place 19 centuries earlier. In the articles that stigmatize his novel, he sees the main drawback as the lack of truth. In an early edition of “The Master and Margarita”, he tells Bezdomny: “I firmly knew that there was no truth in them, and especially this distinguished Mstislav Lavrovich's articles” (Bulgakov, 2006, p. 466), the prototype of which was Vsevolod Vishnevsky. The master sees the meaning of “eternal life” not in scientific knowledge, but in artistic creativity. Ivan Bezdomny in the epilogue seems to repeat the fate of Kovrin, turning into professor of the Institute of History and Philosophy Ivan Nikolaevich Ponyrev, who, like Chekhov's hero, as well as the master, is aware of his mental disorder. The master says to Bezdomny: “Let's face the truth, – and the guest turned his face towards the night luminary running through the cloud. – And you and I are crazy, why deny it! You see, he shocked you – and you went crazy, because you obviously have the suitable ground for this. But what you are telling me undoubtedly occurred in reality” (Bulgakov, 2006, p. 742).

Bulgakov, in the person of Bezdomny-Ponyrev, seemed to trace the possible “prosperous” fate of a hero like Kovrin already in Soviet Russia, where he was destined to turn into a pathetic “red professor”. Here Bulgakov was guided by that part of the critics who believed that Kovrin looks outstanding and brilliant only in his own eyes, but in reality is mediocrity. Unfavorable, from everyday point of view, the version of Kovrin's fate is realized in the fate of the Bulgakov master. By the way, “master” also means “master” as a scientific degree, for example, in English “Master of Arts”. At the end of the story, Kovrin gets an independent Chair, i.e. becomes a professor, but this happens when he, seemingly cured of the black monk, loses his creativity, achieves, in his own words, “the position of a mediocre scientist” (Chekhov, 1985c, p. 256) and the aggravated consumption does not allow him to start lectures. In the same way, Bezdomny became Professor Ponyrev, who was cured and forgot the story of Pilate and Yeshua and loses his creativity.

Chekhov's story cannot be reduced to a “medical story” illustrating megalomania. The rational explanation in “The Black Monk” is present, but does not exhaust what is happening. In particular, we still do not get an unambiguous answer to the question whether Kovrin is a genius or mediocrity, whether he makes great philosophical discoveries in reality or only in his own imagination. Similarly, in “The Master and Margarita”, a rational explanation in the form of schizophrenia is present, but does not exhaust what is happening and leaves room for mystical plots that are too complex to explain them with collective hallucinations.

Nina A. Dmitrieva proved quite convincingly that the prototype both of Kovrin and of the related to him Black Monk was the founder of the Russian religious philosophy of the 19th century Vladimir Sergeevich Solovyov (1853–1900), with whom Chekhov was personally acquainted and whose work he highly appreciated (see: Dmitrieva, 2007, pp. 252–284) In the year of the creation of “The Black Monk” Solovyov was 40 years old – the same age as Kovrin at the time of his death. In the last decades of his life, Solovyov was actually a wanderer, having no home of his own, and exhausted himself with fasts, and outwardly, with a black beard and a thin face, he looked like a monk. His lifestyle, in particular, his passion for turpentine's use, gave rise to doubts about his mental normality among those who knew him. But Solovyov, who declared himself very early as a philosopher, despite all the disputes about his works, was by no means mediocre, but was revered by many as a genius. Therefore, for Chekhov, Kovrin is a real genius, although suffering from megalomania. Bulgakov knew Russian religious philosophy well, which was reflected in “The Master and Margarita”, and, quite likely, identified the prototype of the main character of “The Black Monk”. Therefore, Bulgakov's sympathies are more on the side of Kovrin, who was reflected in the images of the master and Yeshua, and not on the side of Pestsotsky, reflected in Pilate, Woland and Stravinsky.

Kovrin's new wife, to whom he completely submits, although there is no great love between them, is named Varvara Nikolaevna, and the master's first wife, whom he does not love and does not remember, is named Varenka (Bulgakov, 2006, p. 745). Kovrin “remembered how once he tore his dissertation and all the articles written during his illness into small pieces, and how he threw them out



of the window, and the pieces, flying in the wind, clung to trees and flowers; in every line he saw strange, unfounded claims, frivolous fervor, audacity, megalomania, and it made such an impression on him, as if he was reading a description of his vices; but when the last notebook was torn and flew out the window, for some reason he suddenly felt annoyed and bitter, he went to his wife and said a lot of unpleasant things to her” (Chekhov, 1985c, p. 254). Similarly, the master, in a state of depression caused by a campaign of harassment, burns the manuscript of the novel, and the late Margarita manages to save only the last bundle of sheets. Only Kovrin destroys an already defended dissertation after recovery, and then breaks up with Tanya, and the master burns an unpublished novel at the beginning of his illness and connects with Margarita, who, like Varvara Nikolaevna, wants to take him to the Black Sea, but does not have time to do it because of the arrest of the master and his subsequent placement in the Stravinsky clinic. Tanya curses Kovrin, blaming him for the death of his father and the death of the garden: “An unbearable pain burns my soul... Damn you. I took you for an extraordinary person, for a genius, I fell in love with you, but you turned out to be crazy...” (Chekhov, 1985c, p. 255). Margarita loves the master to the end.

And just before his death from consumption, the Black Monk appears to Kovrin again, and he feels a sense of joy for the last time and again believes that he is not mediocrity, but a genius and the chosen one of God, before he dies he calls Tanya and dies with a blissful smile on his face. Bulgakov's master, before his death and transition to the world of eternal peace, meets Woland, who acts as an analogue of Chekhov's Black Monk, and forever connects with Margarita. The riddle of the Black Monk is impossible to solve – he is a messenger of God or the devil. And just like Kovrin before his death, on the day of the spring full moon, madness and creativity return to Bezdomy-Ponyrev, he hallucinates again, talks to himself and sees Yeshua and Pilate.

Chekhov's hero is endowed with a name, patronymic and surname – Andrei Vasilyich Kovrin, then Bulgakov's hero even has a surname forgotten. Kovrin is represented by a well-known outstanding and brilliant scientist. Bulgakov, apparently, believed that those critics who believed that Chekhov's sympathies lay more on Kovrin's side than Pesotsky's one were right. After all, Tanya tells Kovrin that her father is “proud of you. You are a scientist, an extraordinary person, you have made a brilliant career for yourself, and he is sure that you came out like this because he brought you up” (Chekhov, 1985c, pp. 228, 230) even before she fell in love with Andrey. The master is unable to publish his novel and receives short-term fame as a result of a campaign of harassment launched in the press. But both end up with a mental disorder and premature death. In addition, Bulgakov's Pilate is endowed with a resemblance to Pesotsky, and the master is endowed with a resemblance to Kovrin.

Satan's Great ball as if is opposed to the wedding of Kovrin and Tanya, “which, at the insistence of Yegor Semyonich, was celebrated ‘with a bang’, that is, with a stupid revelry that lasted two days. They ate and drank for about three thousand rubles, but from the bad hired music, loud toasts and footmen running around, from the noise and crowding, they did not understand the taste either in expensive wines or in amazing snacks ordered from Moscow” (Chekhov, 1985c,

p. 247) On the contrary, the order of Woland's ball is absolutely thought out, the servants behave immaculately, the best musicians of the world play, and nothing prevents guests from enjoying the best wines and dishes.

### Conclusion

Bulgakov widely used the images of “*The Black Monk*” in “*The Master and Margarita*”, and the heroes of Chekhov's story were reflected in such heroes and characters of Bulgakov's novel as Margarita (Tanya Pesotskaya), the master (Andrey Vasilyevich Kovrin), Yeshua (Kovrin), Ivan Bezdomny-Ponyrev (Kovrin), Stravinsky (Egor Semenovich Pesotsky) Pilate (Pesotsky), Voland (the Black Monk), Varenka, the master's first wife (Varvara Nikolaevna, Kovrin's second wife). But they operate in other epochs – in the era of the emergence of Christianity and in the “year of the great turning point” – 1929.

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