

## THE IMAGE OF THE GARDEN IN THE NOVELLA THE BLACK MONK BY ANTON CHEKHOV

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### **Annotation**

The article examines the image of the garden in the novella *The Black Monk* and its symbolic role in the artistic structure of the work. The study focuses on the opposition between the garden and the park, their spatial organization, and their influence on the development of the plot and the characters. Special attention is given to biblical symbolism and the motif of the lost Paradise. The image of the garden is interpreted as a symbol of harmony, human labor, memory, and destiny, as well as a space of loss and spiritual destruction.

### **Keywords**

image of the garden, symbolism, biblical motif, life and death, loss and acquisition, *The Black Monk*, Pesotsky, Kovrin.

The image of the garden occupies an important place in the artistic world of Anton Chekhov. In many of his works, the garden appears as a significant space where human relationships and inner conflicts are revealed. This motif can be found in the plays *Ivanov*, *The Seagull*, and *Uncle Vanya*, where the garden or park becomes the setting of key dramatic events.

The symbolic meaning of the garden becomes especially clear in the play *Three Sisters*, where the final act takes place in the garden. Chekhov deliberately shifts attention from the whole space to its individual elements, such as trees and alleys. In 1893, during his stay in Melikhovo, Chekhov wrote *The Black Monk*. This novella reflects his impressions of rural life, including his interest in gardening. As noted by S. V. Tikhomirov, the garden in *The Black Monk* is closely connected with the Melikhovo garden, where fruit trees and rich flowerbeds were cultivated<sup>1</sup>.

In *The Black Monk*, images of nature perform not only a decorative function but also an important semantic role. The artistic space of the novella is clearly divided into two parts: the garden and the park.

The park is described as gloomy and strict, creating a feeling of isolation and emotional coldness. The river in the park appears deserted and lifeless. In contrast, the garden is presented as a lively and joyful space. From early morning until evening, people work there with wheelbarrows, hoes, and watering cans. Human labor fills the garden with movement and sound, emphasizing its connection with life.<sup>2</sup>

Another important difference is seen in the vegetation. In the park grow pine trees with exposed roots, which create an atmosphere of anxiety and death. Pesotsky's garden, on the contrary, is full of diverse and unusual plants, symbolizing richness, creativity, and harmony.

The novella *The Black Monk* can be interpreted as a philosophical reflection on life and death, as well as on the relationship between the real and the unreal worlds. The image of the garden is closely connected with the biblical image of the Garden of Eden. It is described as cheerful and full of life even in bad weather, which emphasizes its symbolic perfection.

Color symbolism plays an important role in the description of the garden. Light and white colors are associated with purity and Paradise, while black is connected with death and evil. The

<sup>1</sup> Krasnopol'sky, V. G. (1989). The Poetics of Creativity: Chekhov and Bunin. Questions of Literature, 4, 1–16

<sup>2</sup> Tikhomirov, S. V. (2002). Creativity as a Confession of the Unconscious: Chekhov and Others. Moscow.

inhabitants of the estate live by honest labor, cultivating the garden and trying to preserve it for future generations. For Kovrin, the garden awakens feelings of joy and inner peace and reminds him of his childhood.

It is not accidental that Kovrin's memories of childhood are connected with the garden. The decorative part of the garden, which Pesotsky considers unimportant, produces a fairy-tale impression on the protagonist. This reinforces the idea of the garden as a space of innocence and spiritual harmony.

Gradually, the harmonious world of the garden begins to collapse. The threat of frost forces people to protect the trees with smoke, filling the garden with a black, heavy atmosphere<sup>3</sup>.

The strict order of the commercial garden, where all trees are identical, makes the space monotonous and lifeless.

A symbolic moment of destruction occurs when a horse is tied to an apple tree. This episode refers to the biblical Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and marks the beginning of the garden's decline. Pesotsky's desperate cries emphasize the idea that the garden, which represents his life's work, is being destroyed.

The image of the lost Paradise is directly connected with the figure of the Black Monk. He appears to Kovrin as a mysterious and frightening vision, resembling a whirlwind or dark column. The monk emerges from a deserted space beyond the garden, which separates the world of life from the world of death.

The river functions as a boundary between these two worlds. The Black Monk belongs to the empty and lifeless space and remains invisible to the other characters, who continue their work in the garden. He tempts Kovrin with ideas of greatness and chosenness, which lead the protagonist away from reality and toward spiritual and physical destruction<sup>4</sup>.

For Pesotsky and his daughter, the garden becomes the main meaning of life. All their thoughts and efforts are connected with cultivating and preserving it. Such complete devotion creates a closed way of life that limits their emotional and spiritual development.

The fate of the characters is closely connected with the fate of the garden. As long as the garden exists, their life seems stable and meaningful. When the garden begins to perish, Pesotsky dies, and later Kovrin also meets his tragic end. Thus, the garden becomes a symbol of human destiny and the fragility of existence.

The image of the garden in The Black Monk plays a key role in the artistic and philosophical structure of the novella. It combines several symbolic meanings: Paradise, labor, memory, and destiny. The destruction of the garden represents the loss of harmony and the expulsion from a spiritual Paradise.

Through the image of the garden, Chekhov reveals the tragic consequences of temptation and illusion. The novella shows that human happiness and creative life are fragile and can be destroyed when balance and connection with reality are lost.

## References

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