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# THE COLORISTIC ORGANIZATION OF ARTISTIC SPACE IN A.P. CHEKHOV'S THREE SISTERS

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### Abstract

The article examines the role of color detail in the organization of artistic space in A.P. Chekhov's Three Sisters. The analysis demonstrates that in Chekhov's dramaturgy color performs not a decorative but a structuring function: it participates in the construction of the stage world, reveals the correlation between memory and the present, emphasizes the changing internal status of the Prozorov house, and helps disclose the process by which the heroines become alienated from a space that had once embodied family unity and cultural measure.

**Keywords:** A.P. Chekhov, Three Sisters, color detail, artistic space, dramaturgy, poetics, Prozorov house, psychologism, stage world, color symbolism.

### Аннотация

В статье рассматривается роль цветовой детали в организации художественного пространства пьесы А.П. Чехова «Три сестры». Анализ

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показывает, что цвет в драматургии Чехова выполняет не декоративную, а структурообразующую функцию: он участвует в построении сценического мира, выявляет соотношение памяти и настоящего, подчеркивает изменение внутреннего статуса дома Прозоровых и помогает раскрыть процесс отчуждения героинь от пространства, которое ранее являлось носителем семейной целостности и культурной меры.

### Annotatsiya

Maqolada A.P. Chexovning “Uch opa-singil” pyesasida rang detalining badiiy makonni tashkil etishdagi oʻrni tadqiq etiladi. Tahlil shuni koʻrsatadiki, Chexov dramaturgiyasida rang bezak unsuri emas, balki struktura hosil qiluvchi vosita sifatida namoyon boʻladi: u sahna olamini qurishda ishtirok etadi, хотира va hozirgi zamon oʻrtasidagi nisbatni ochib beradi, Prozorovlar uyining ichki maqomidagi oʻzgarishni taʼkidlaydi hamda qahramon ayollarning avval oilaviy yaxlitlik va madaniy meʼyor timsoli boʻlgan makondan begonalashuv jarayonini koʻrsatadi. Maqolada kiyim ranglari, yorugʻlik tavsiflari, uy ichki tuzilishi, bogʻ va archa alleyasining obrazlari oʻrtasidagi bogʻliqlik alohida tahlil qilinadi.

**Ключевые слова:** А.П. Чехов, Три сестры, цветовая деталь, художественное пространство, драматургия, поэтика, дом Прозоровых, психологизм, сценический мир, символика цвета.

**Kalit soʻzlar:** A.P. Chexov, Uch opa-singil, rang detali, badiiy makon, dramaturgiya, poetika, Prozorovlar uyi, psixologizm, sahna olami, rang ramziyligi.

### Introduction

In modern literary studies, color is increasingly understood not merely as a visual characteristic of the scene, but as an important semantic and structural element of the artistic whole. This is especially significant in drama, where the author's

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possibilities for direct psychological commentary are limited. In dramatic writing, the inner life of the characters is revealed indirectly – through stage directions, costume details, lighting, spatial composition, objects, and recurrent motifs. Within this framework, color becomes one of the means by which the stage world acquires emotional depth and semantic tension.

### Literature review

In A.P. Chekhov's dramaturgy, the relationship between color and space is particularly subtle. His plays are built on understatement, subtext, and the suggestive power of detail; therefore, scenic space is never neutral. Rooms, gardens, alleys, times of day, light, and costume all form an interconnected system that reflects the emotional and existential condition of the characters [4; 5]. In *Three Sisters*, this principle is especially evident. The Prozorov house is not simply the setting of the action but a symbolic space of memory, education, family continuity, and cultural order. As the play develops, this space changes internally, and color detail becomes one of the chief means of making this transformation visible.

The purpose of this article is to analyze how color detail participates in the organization of artistic space in *Three Sisters* and how it helps reveal the gradual loss of inner belonging experienced by the heroines.

The spatial structure of *Three Sisters* unfolds dynamically rather than statically. At the beginning of the play, the Prozorov house still appears as a world of internal coherence, cultural memory, and family integrity. The stage direction of Act One introduces a spring daytime atmosphere that conveys clarity, openness, and yet unbroken order [1, p. 68]. The significance of this detail is not limited to temporal orientation. May daylight, air, and openness create the impression that the house still preserves its inner measure. It remains connected with the memory of the past, with education, cultivated habits, and the dream of Moscow.

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This luminous spatial organization is supported by the costume characteristics of the sisters. A.P. Chekhov carefully notes that Olga is “in the blue uniform dress of a teacher,” Masha is “in a black dress,” and Irina is “in a white dress” [1, p. 74]. These colors are neither random nor merely decorative. Together they form a balanced internal system, and through this balance the appearance of the heroines extends the atmosphere of the house itself.

### Discussion

Olga’s blue suggests discipline, restraint, and stability. It corresponds not only to her profession as a teacher but also to her ethical role in the family. She is the one who still upholds form, duty, and order. Thus, blue becomes part of the spatial composition as a sign of moral composure and inner endurance. It does not dominate the scene; rather, it supports its equilibrium.

Irina’s white dress intensifies the bright tonality of Act One. At the beginning of the play, Irina is associated with youth, hope, and faith in meaningful work and in a different, fuller life. Her aspirations correspond to white as a sign of purity and of a life perspective not yet exhausted. What is particularly important is that this whiteness does not exist separately from the general scenic order. It merges with the daytime May light of the first act, as if the house were still capable of accommodating such hope within its structure.

Masha’s black dress introduces a different emotional note. It is linked to heaviness, inward dissatisfaction, and the experience of an unhappy life. Yet at this stage the dark accent does not destroy the equilibrium of the house. It exists within the luminous environment as a hidden crack – a sign that drama is already present, though it has not yet transformed the entire order of life. In this way, the first act is built on the coexistence of light and the first outlines of shadow.

This is one of A.P. Chekhov’s greatest artistic precisions: he does not present the Prozorov home as an unquestionably happy world. Tension is already present from the beginning, but it is still contained within cultural form.

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Natasha's appearance immediately disturbs this system. Masha describes her clothing as "a strange bright yellowish skirt and a red blouse" [1, p. 77]. This remark is significant not simply as an ironic judgment, but as the first sign of a clash between two spatial logics. The sisters' world is organized around inner restraint and a sense of proportion. Natasha enters it with a different color model – sharp, externally conspicuous, and unresponsive to the tone of the house.

The yellowish and red colors are important precisely as a combination that does not correspond to the tonal system of the Prozorov home. The point is not that these colors are intrinsically "bad," but that they are disproportionate to the space into which they are introduced. A.P. Chekhov reveals otherness not through direct explanation, but through incongruity. Natasha seems unable to hear the color tone of the house. Consequently, her costume becomes not simply a sign of poor taste, but the first symptom of future invasion.

This line is strengthened in the episode with the belt. Olga says, "You have a green belt on! My dear, that is not at all nice!" [1, p. 80], to which Natasha replies, "It's not green, it's rather dull" [1, p. 85]. The conflict here is not about a minor item of clothing; it concerns different understandings of form, appropriateness, and measure. For the sisters, color is part of an inner cultural order. For Natasha, it is a random external mark. Her reply reveals not merely a confusion of shades, but an absence of sensitivity to aesthetic proportion.

The green belt thus acquires a specific function within the play. It becomes a visible sign that an element has entered the ordered world without understanding its internal law. From this moment onward, color detail begins to participate directly in the organization of conflict: the family space first comes into palpable contact with a mode of life alien to it.

In Act Two, the domestic order begins to shift more noticeably. The luminous stability of the first act gives way to a more enclosed, evening, and inwardly anxious space [1, p. 88]. This change is important not merely as a scenic transition, but as a sign of the loss of former clarity. If the house had earlier

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appeared as a world in which each detail was still coordinated with inner cultural measure, it now becomes a site of tension and redistribution of power.

This process is especially visible in the changing role of rooms. In Chekhov, a room is never only a бытовое element; it is part of the intimate and symbolic map of home. Therefore, the question of who is to move, who gives up a room, and where the child will live is not a practical trifle but an expression of internal dispossession. When Natasha begins to give orders concerning the rooms, she interferes not in household management alone, but in the very inner structure of the house.

This is especially meaningful in relation to Irina. In Act One she was associated with white as the color of beginning and openness, but in Act Two she is already no longer at the center of a bright festive world. She becomes someone whose place can be moved. White, as the color of possibility, gradually loses its spatial center. The heroine still remains inside the house, but she no longer determines its inner rhythm.

Olga also loses her former position. In the first act, her blue supported order; now her moral composure still exists inwardly, but no longer influences the structure of life around her. She no longer organizes the house; she merely continues to live in it under conditions shaped by another will.

Masha, whose black dress in the beginning functioned as an inner crack within a still coherent world, becomes even more estranged from the new environment. Her drama deepens because she experiences not only personal unhappiness but also the destruction of the very world in which this unhappiness could once be understood.

Thus, Act Two is crucial because it shows not abrupt ruin, but gradual displacement. The color system that once expressed the internal structure of the house ceases to coincide with the way the house now functions.

In Act Three, the spatial conflict reaches a high point of tension. The image of the fire enters the play together with the “red glow” [1, p. 114]. This detail is of

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exceptional importance. The red light does not merely indicate an external event. It makes visible the inner meaning of what has already been happening within the house. What previously existed as hidden displacement now acquires an almost catastrophic form.

The red glow comes from outside, yet it illuminates the inner space. Thus the boundary between house and external chaos is itself violated. What had earlier been sustained as a protected world becomes permeable. The space can no longer separate itself from destructive force. This is why the red light in Act Three is not a decorative effect, but the visual form of a general crisis in the world of the play. It is also significant that this glow internally echoes Natasha's earlier color line. Her red blouse in Act One appeared as a private and almost ridiculous detail. In Act Three, red expands to the scale of the whole stage. In other words, a private color dissonance becomes the dominant tone of the transformed space. This transition is highly revealing: A.P. Chekhov shows how an alien detail gradually becomes the prevailing atmosphere of a changed world.

Natasha's behavior in this act intensifies the same process. Her coarse command to the nurse acquires additional force against the background of the red light [1, p. 91]. What is at stake is no longer mere domestic rudeness, but the submission of the inner world of the house to a will devoid of the cultural measure on which it once rested. The red glow and Natasha's speech thus work together: one provides the spatial image of destruction, the other its ethical content.

By this point it becomes especially clear that the sisters no longer rule the world that had once been theirs. They are still physically present in the house, but they no longer determine its tone, rhythm, or inner law. Color and space alike now belong to another principle.

Particular attention should be given to the image of the fir-tree avenue. This detail is important not only as part of the landscape, but as an expression of the deep memory of the house. The avenue is linked with duration, continuity, and cultural rootedness. It belongs not to the plane of everyday convenience, but to a space

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that preserves time itself. That is why Natasha's desire to cut it down has such serious significance. What is threatened here is not merely the arrangement of the garden, but the symbolic depth of the Prozorov world.

The finale takes place no longer in the house, but in the garden. This choice is fundamental. The house as the center of action has been lost. It physically remains, but has ceased to function as the inner center of the sisters' world. Therefore, the final action moves outward. The space is open, but this openness does not bring freedom; rather, it emphasizes the absence of support.

The stage direction of Act Four is especially meaningful: "A long fir-tree avenue, at the end of which the river can be seen... Twelve o'clock in the day" [1, p. 95]. Light returns, but its meaning has changed. In the first act, daylight supported hope and order. In the finale, the same daytime background illuminates not beginning, but separation. The space is still visible and open, yet it no longer conveys belonging.

Another important detail is that "it is clear that champagne has just been drunk" [1, p. 99]. This stage direction creates the effect of remainder, trace, and aftermath. What we see is not a festive present, but a space after an event, after something already completed. Even the objects point not to fullness of life, but to what is passing away. This reinforces the sense that the heroines are in a place that has ceased to be the center of their existence.

At this point it is important to stress that the final space no longer belongs to the sisters not only factually but symbolically. White, blue, and black – the personal colors that at the beginning of the play also helped organize the inner world of the house – no longer determine the general structure of the scene. The space has become wider, but inwardly emptier. The house is behind them, the avenue stretches into the distance, the river is visible in perspective, and the final composition is built on recession rather than gathering. This is no longer the space of life, but the space of farewell.

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Irina leaves, Masha remains with her inner pain, Olga accepts fate as necessity. They are still physically present in this environment, but they no longer possess it semantically. This is the tragedy of the finale: the heroines are not exiled in a literal sense, yet they lose space as a continuation of their own inner life. The garden and the avenue become images not of belonging, but of a departing world.

### Conclusion

The analysis of *Three Sisters* demonstrates that color detail and the organization of artistic space form a unified system in Chekhov's dramaturgy. Color helps define the Prozorov world as a space of measure, memory, and culture; then it records the intrusion of an alien principle; finally, it conveys the state of loss in which this space no longer belongs to the heroines.

In Act One, color supports a still-preserved harmony. With Natasha's appearance, it begins to register dissonance. In Act Three, the red glow makes the invasion of chaos visible. In the finale, the garden and the fir-tree avenue express not conflict itself, but its result – inner estrangement, parting, and the impossibility of return. Therefore, in *Three Sisters*, color does not merely accompany scenic space, but actively participates in its semantic construction.

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