

Where not to be:
concepts of home in
'the cherry orchard'
and 'chronicle of a
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In Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* and Gabriel García Márquez's *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, both protagonists face difficult, if not deadly, circumstances. Liubóv Andréyevna Ranyévskaya, a self-indulgent member of the declining Russian landed gentry from *The Cherry Orchard*, is facing the auctioning away of her home. Santiago Nasar, a philandering member of the Columbian upper class from *Chronicle of a Death Foretold*, is accused of sleeping with Angela Vicario and is in danger of being murdered by her brothers. In trying to escape their circumstances, the two characters retreat to their homes for safety, but their homes end up being where they face and succumb to their troubles. Chekhov and García Márquez's utilization of their protagonists' homes as the setting of their ruin calls into question whether or not the home is a safe haven from individual strife. Chekhov uses stage directions in Act III to describe Liubóv's home as a lively and warm location and then a lonely, empty room to juxtapose her family's losing of their estate due to their poor financial state. At the beginning of the act, Liubóv is hosting a dance to purchasing her estate back. The sitting room where Act III occurs is described as being " separated from the ballroom in the back by an archway. The chandeliers are lit. From the entrance hall comes the sound of an orchestra" (Chekhov 362). Chandeliers at the time would have been lit by candles, which would emanate a warm glow into the room so, by describing the chandeliers as lit, Chekhov creates a welcoming mood in the room for his audience. Chekhov writes in an orchestra playing so the audience would hear lively music, continuing the jubilant mood. It would seem as if no harm could penetrate this celebration and that Liubóv is protected from her troubles.

However, by the end of the act, Liubóv has been told that her estate has been auctioned away. Chekhov describes the scene then with " The sitting
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room ... empty except for Liubóv ... The orchestra [playing] softly" (Chekhov 374). Minutes earlier, the room was filled with cheeriness due to the party that was occurring. The room is now empty, paralleling the emptiness overcoming Liubóv. Chekhov has the orchestra shift to " soft" music in order to reflect Liubóv's depressed state due to losing everything. Liubóv tried to use her home as a mental escape from the realization that the orchard would be sold but failed, and her hardships came to her instead. Similarly, García Márquez establishes the Nasar home as an unsafe location for Santiago to go to protect himself, despite the general belief that a person's home is the safest place to be. García Márquez initially describes the Nasar home as " a former warehouse, with ... walls of rough planks, and a peaked tin roof where the buzzards kept watch over the garbage on the docks" (Márquez 10).

García Márquez's use of diction with " rough planks" and " tin roof" creates the feeling of instability and insecurity in the home. Instead of using words that have a sturdy connotation, García Márquez effectively uses words that depict Santiago's home as not being very safe to begin with. In addition, the description of buzzards resting on the home gives the sense of them waiting to watch his death. García Márquez goes on to say that " The front door, except for festive occasions, remained closed and barred" (Márquez 12). The words " closed" and " barred" create a sense of security that the rest of the home does not provide. García Márquez also does this to single out the door as an important structure due to its uniquely solid design in relation to the rest of the house. When Santiago is trying to escape the murderous Vicario brothers, believing that her son is already inside the house, "[Plácida Linero] ran to the door and slammed it shut. She was putting up the bar when she heard Santiago Nasar's shouts, and ... the terrified pounding on the door" <https://assignbuster.com/where-not-to-be-concepts-of-home-in-the-cherry-orchard-and-chronicle-of-a-death-foretold/>

(Márquez 117). García Márquez creates irony in this passage as the barred door, which was supposed to protect Santiago, contributed to his death as he could not enter his home. What was meant to protect Santiago and his family, instead led to Santiago's murder. The irony of the situation is extended to the fact that Santiago's mother, Plácida Linero, is the one who locked the door. Traditionally, mothers are considered the most protective of their children and protect them at all costs. Plácida's actions are as much at fault for Santiago's death as the Vicario twins. In his final moments of life, "Santiago Nasar turned frontward again and leaned his back against his mother's door" (Márquez 118). Even in Santiago's death, his using the door for support represents his looking to his home for safety, despite the lack thereof. García Márquez's decision to write that it is Santiago's "mother's door" is a play on words to the fact the door is part of his mother's house, but that his mother closed the door and prevented him from entering to safety. García Márquez never establishes Santiago's home as a safe location to find refuge, and the events of Santiago's murder reaffirm this idea. Both Chekhov and García Márquez use their protagonist's homes as the locations of the climaxes of their individual struggles. However, the nature of the characters' refuge in their homes is different. While Liubóv is in her home, trying to keep out the problems in her life through parties and distractions, Santiago is fighting to enter his home in order to save his life. Chekhov's use of stage directions provides a clear direction in how to stage Liubóv's heartbreak, but misses the mark in fully capturing the role of the house due to the setting's stagnant nature. Meanwhile, García Márquez creates a deeper meaning behind the faith in security people place in their homes, and portrays this fault more harshly and intensely than Chekhov does in his work.

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Both authors effectively use setting in their climaxes, but García Márquez uses setting as a character in the story in a way that surpasses Chekhov's usage of setting in the background of the plot.