Coordenadoria
do Curso de Letras
Língua Inglesa e suas Literaturas

Universidade Federal
de São João del-Rei

ANA LAURA JOHANN CHAVES RESENDE

MAMAH'S TRAJECTORY CONNECTED THROUGH ARCHITECTURE:

FROM LOVING FRANK TO SEEKING FOR INDEPENDENCE

São João del-Rei

2025

ANA LAURA JOHANN CHAVES RESENDE

MAMAH'S TRAJECTORY CONNECTED THROUGH ARCHITECTURE:

FROM LOVING FRANK TO SEEKING FOR INDEPENDENCE

Trabalho de Conclusão de Curso apresentado à Coordenadoria do Curso de Letras – Língua Inglesa e suas Literaturas, da Universidade Federal de São João del-Rei, como requisito parcial à obtenção do título de Licenciado em Letras – Língua Inglesa e suas Literaturas.

Orientadora: Miriam de Paiva Vieira

São João del-Rei

2025

Dedico este trabalho a todos que fizeram e fazem parte da minha trajetória, em especial à Miriam e à minha família.

AGRADECIMENTOS

Primeiramente, agradeço todos os professores do curso de Letras da Universidade Federal de São João del-Rei (UFSJ) porque cada um deles também teve um papel importante na minha formação como professora. Também é importante mencionar todos os meus professores da minha trajetória de vida escolar, sem eles eu não estaria onde estou.

Cada professor ou professora com quem tive contato em meu caminho me proporcionou reflexões e me impactou de alguma maneira para que eu aprendesse. Foi graças a cada um deles que eu busquei cada vez mais me tornar uma professora. Alguns me ensinaram por exemplos, outros por palavras e alguns até por me mostrarem aquilo com que eu não concordava. A todos eles, eu agradeço.

De modo especial, agradeço imensamente a professora Miriam de Paiva Vieira pela orientação dedicada que tanto me ensinou e proporcionou que eu chegasse até aqui. A Miriam foi responsável por resgatar meu gosto pela literatura e a minha vontade de sonhar em dar continuidade à minha trajetória acadêmica! Suas aulas e sua orientação me impactaram significativa e positivamente, então a ela, meu muito obrigada.

Por fim, e não menos importante, agradeço à minha família – meus pais, irmão, noivo, tios, primos e avós – que, no âmbito pessoal, me apoiaram, me incentivaram e mantiveram firme a minha fé. Eles são responsáveis pelos meus valores e me mantiveram conectada às minhas raízes, impedindo que eu desistisse e me fazendo recuperar minha confiança em acreditar na busca por uma educação transformadora em um mundo muitas vezes contraditório e cruel.

Todas essas pessoas de alguma forma me impactaram e me impulsionaram a chegar até aqui! Acredito, ainda, que esse impacto continuará produzindo frutos para sempre. Dessa forma, não posso deixar de agradecer a todos eles!

“There are phrases which charm like a song, and one of these phrases is: “The Woman of the Future’”

Ellen Key, translated by Mamah Borthwick, 1911

ABSTRACT

Mamah Borthwick's life was impacted by the houses she had contact with in the novel *Loving Frank* by Nancy Horan (2007). *The Good Times House* represents the beginning of her relationship with the architect Frank Lloyd Wright and the start of her search for freedom in love. *The Strand*, built by the Swedish feminist Ellen Key, indicates self-discovery through her developed self-awareness of her own desires and identity. Ultimately, it is from the construction of *Taliesin* that Frank Lloyd Wright and Mamah Borthwick dreamed and planned the design of the space where they would live together, materializing in a house their trajectory, turning their home a concrete reality. In this sense, *Taliesin* is the space that connects these lives and symbolizes Mamah's search for independence, connecting it with her search for love and self-discovery. Based on the interpretative model of ekphrasis (Vieira, 2021a, 2021b), Mamah's journey is analyzed by the way she haptically experiences the architectural works present in the novel. Therefore, her position as a focalizer significantly impacts her trajectory constantly (re)constructed through the interaction with different houses and construction processes. Finally, it is worth mentioning Claus Clüver (2019), Miriam Vieira (2017, 2021a, 2021b) and Gaston Bachelard (1994) as the main theoretical contributions.

Keywords: Architectural ekphrasis; Mamah Borthwick; Frank Lloyd Wright; Ellen Key; freedom of personality.

RESUMO

Mamah Borthwick tem sua trajetória de vida impactada pelas casas com as quais têm contato no romance *Loving Frank* de Nancy Horan (2007). *The Good Times House* representa o princípio da convivência com o arquiteto Frank Lloyd Wright e o início da busca por liberdade no amor. *The Strand*, construída pela feminista sueca Ellen Key, salienta a autodescoberta da personagem através do desenvolvimento da consciência dos seus próprios desejos e da sua identidade. Por último, é a partir da construção de *Taliesin* que Frank Lloyd Wright e Mamah Borthwick sonharam e planejaram o design do espaço onde morariam juntos, materializando em uma casa a trajetória de ambos, concretizando-a em um lar. Nesse sentido, *Taliesin* é o espaço que interliga essas vidas e simboliza a busca por independência de Mamah, conectando-a com sua procura por amor e autodescoberta. Ancorando-se no modelo interpretativo de écfrase (Vieira, 2021a, 2021b), o percurso de Mamah é analisado pela forma como ela experiencia hapticamente as obras arquitetônicas presentes no romance. Portanto, a posição dela enquanto focalizadora impacta significativamente sua trajetória na medida em que é (re)construída por meio da interação com diferentes casas e processos de construção. Por fim, é imprescindível mencionar Claus Clüver (2019), Miriam Vieira (2017, 2021a, 2021b) e Gaston Bachelard (1994) como principais aportes teóricos.

Palavras-Chave: Écfrase arquitetônica; Mamah Borthwick; Frank Lloyd Wright; Ellen Key; liberdade de personalidade.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

Women, throughout the time, have had to struggle for their own rights, for their space. Every social achievement had to be fought for over generations, as some women's efforts paved future gains. According to the novel *Loving Frank*, the women's rights movement focused primarily on securing suffrage at the beginning of last century. Mamah Borthwick, however, who was the translator of the Swedish feminist Ellen Key, believed it was necessary to go beyond and empower women to conquer freedom of personality. Her story, narrated in *Loving Frank* (Horan, 2007), can be analyzed using her interaction with architecture as a central thread that connects her personal trajectory to this relevant social context.

Mamah Borthwick is the main character of *Loving Frank* (Horan, 2007). Being connected to the Woman Movement since her youth, her fight for freedom in love was intensified in her personal life by the choices she made throughout her trajectory. She agreed with the Woman Movement, but believed their fight should go beyond and embrace the individualism of women. In this context, she sought for self-discovery and independence while facing public opinion. All her social context and personal characterization and development is permeated by the spaces in which she lived.

This final paper aims to analyze the implications of Frank Lloyd Wright's architectural works on Mamah Borthwick, narrated in the historical fiction[1] *Loving Frank* (Horan, 2007). The novel is titled in this manner since it is focalized on Martha Bouton – Mamah – Borthwick who was Wright's lover from around 1907 to 1914. Hence, the novel focalizes Mamah Borthwick's life, which emphasizes her social context and her close relationship with the Woman Movement. However, the narrative's third person narrator enabled this analysis of architectural ekphrases. Thus, this work aims to discuss how Mamah Borthwick's trajectory from loving Frank Lloyd Wright to seeking for independence is connected around the houses presented in the novel.

Before we delve into the theoretical concepts that anchor this analysis, it is relevant to explain the word choice for the main character Mamah Borthwick, as we will be referring to this character by her nickname. Martha Bouton Borthwick being her full name, Mamah was a nickname given by her French grandmother. As Mamah explained to Frank, she believed her grandmother "[...] made it up because it sounded French" (Horan, 2007, p. 17). This detail

[1] This novel was considered a historical fiction since it relies on the historical figures of Frank Lloyd Wright and Mamah Borthwick whereas it was written in a fictional way, without the compromise with their real history. Besides that, this novel has been reviewed by the Historical Novel Society (Kreckel, online) as such.

connects with Mamah's work as a translator and her multilingual abilities, since, in this same conversation, she confessed that it was because of her grandmother that it all started. Considering that her nickname is meaningful to her personality and life trajectory, the novel's choice to refer to this character by Mamah will be followed throughout this final paper, unless there is an intentional necessity of stating different parts of her life by mentioning her surnames. Likewise, we will refer to Frank Lloyd Wright by the same way he is mentioned in the novel, thus, Frank, when alluding to the character and only mention his full name when regarding the historical figure.

Returning to the theoretical concepts underpinning this work, according to Claus Clüver (2019), the ekphrasis concept comes from the classic notion, and defines the act of bringing a vivid image to the listener's mind through both narration and description. Hence, ekphrases were employed as a rhetorical device. With the advance of mechanical reproduction in the 19th century, ekphrases started to be used by authors as a literary tool. It was not until the 20th century that the concept was broadened into, as Clüver (2019) writes it, "[...] *the verbal representation of real or fictive configurations composed in a non-kinetic visual medium*" (p. 239, italics in the original). In the author's words, "[e]kphrastic representation consists in verbalizing aspects of images or sculptural or architectural configurations in ways that make these represented objects 'clear and distinct' to the mind without literally showing anything [...]" (p. 239), that is, ekphrases are responsible for evoking in the reader's, or listener's, mind a vivid image of the configuration narrated.

Furthermore, ekphrases may be interpreted by its psychological impact on the reader. Since it does not simply mimic an object, but rather the act of perception of an imagetic configuration, it may be considered beyond its referential qualities, according to Miriam Vieira (2017). Thus, still according to her, the discussion concerning ekphrasis should consider the emotional impacts on the reader and, as suggested by Claus Clüver (2019), "[...] the observer's gaze ought to be the central concern of the discourse on ekphrasis" (p. 240). In this way, Clüver (2019) affirms that "[t]hey are not verbal reproductions or transformations of a visual source, but verbalizations of an encounter" (p. 246-247), "[...] of a viewer's engagement with the object of an intensive gaze" (p. 247). What is emphasized here is that the emotional or even physical interaction of the observer to the architectural site is the central point of the analysis.

Because architectural ekphrases may be interpreted by the way the character interacts and relates to the house being exposed, it is fundamental to mention Miriam Vieira's (2021a, 2021b) interpretative model. According to her, "this is a reductionist model, where there is nothing to remove, but certainly to expand from, the foundation of [her] analysis also counts on the notions of embodiment and perspective in order to broaden the understanding of the process in which architecture is transmediated by literature" (2021a, p. 62-63). The interpretative model "encompasses four horizontal and non-hierarchical typologies: contemplative, performative, symbolic and technical" (2021b, p. 7).

> *Contemplative* architectural ekphrasis occurs when the character contemplates an architectural environment, a building or an urban landscape, from a specific point of view, without the focalizing agent physically interacting with the focalized architectural site. Whereas, *performative* architectural ekphrasis happens when the observer, be it the narrator or a character, is physically inside an architectural site. By touring the building, going up and down, in, out, and around, the reader ceases to be a mere spectator and becomes involved in a virtual performance. Since the reader's prior knowledge is of the utmost importance in studies of ekphrasis, the ekphrastic passages that demand a greater cultural or technical background knowledge from the reader have been designated, respectively, as *symbolic* and *technical* architectural ekphrases. (Vieira, 2021b, p. 7, italics in the original)

Moreover, the relevance of this analysis also relies on intermedial studies. Since Claus Clüver (2019) concludes that "[i]f the real or fictive image is the product of a visual encounter with the phenomenal world, the ekphrastic representation will usually suggest the producer's way of representing that world according to the semiotic and cultural conventions of the age" (p. 240). As it transmediates a product from the phenomenal world, in this case architectural sites, he utters an "[...] ekphrasis is widely considered as a prime instance of intermedial or intersemiotic transposition" (Clüver, 2019, p. 246). That is why Miriam Vieira (2021a) combined "[...] Elleström's proposed model for studying the transfer of media characteristics between dissimilar media to the notions of embodiment and perspective [...]" (p. 72) to propose the "[...] interpretative model for architectural ekphrasis" (p. 72) mentioned above. For the purposes of this analysis, even though there are some comments on technical ekphrases, we will focus more on the contemplative and performative typologies, since they are more emphatically related to the character's interactions to the buildings.

At this point, it is relevant to contextualize the origin of this work. It began as a research project (*Iniciação Científica*) under the title "Implications of the relationship

between the architect and his work in the novel *Loving Frank*, by Nancy Horan[2]" in September 2022 and was completed in August 2023. The initial objective was to investigate whether Miriam Vieira's (2021a, 2021b) interpretative model could be applied to examine a book in which architecture was an important, though not central, element. However, as the research progressed, we realized that Mamah's social and philosophical context was fundamental to this analysis and could be perceived through her interactions with the houses presented in the novel. Consequently, our objective developed into an examination of how her life trajectory from loving Frank to seeking independence was impacted by the houses she encountered throughout the novel.

To discuss the characters' relationship with the houses explored in the novel, this research anchors itself in Gaston Bachelard (1994), who views "ground for taking the house as a *tool for analysis* of the human soul" (p. XXXVII, italics in the original). The author also affirms that "[...] memory and imagination remain associated, each one working for their mutual deepening [...], they both constitute a community of memory and image" (p. 5). For that reason, Mamah's perceptions of her social and philosophical context permeate her interactions to the houses in the novel, influencing her insights related to architecture. In addition, considering that Mamah eventually differentiated significantly the use of words such as 'house' and 'home', Bachelard became one of our references to support the assumption that the main character's lack of a sense of belonging led her to desire a home in where she could "have nooks and comers in which [she would] like to curl up comfortably" (p. XXXVIII). According to him, "[t]o curl up belongs to the phenomenology of the verb to inhabit, and only those who have learned to do so can inhabit with intensity" (p. XXXVIII), an idea that underpins his assertion that "all really inhabited space[s] bear the essence of the notion of home" (p. 5). Thus, we analyzed this matter by considering the emotional aspects involved in the interaction with an architectural space when the characters refer to a 'home' and the physical space itself when there is a reference to a 'house'.

Altogether, the main concept anchoring this paper's theoretical foundations is the notion of architectural ekphrasis (Vieira, 2021a, 2021b). However, since Bachelard's notion of house and home allowed the understanding of how to interpret Mamah's relationship with the houses presented in *Loving Frank* (Horan, 2007), this conceptualization is also fundamental for analyzing the main character's emotional (lack of) belonging as it relates to

[2] Implicações da relação do arquiteto e sua obra no romance *Loving Frank*, de Nancy Horan.

the houses investigated. Hence, these two theoretical branches anchor this work, enabling us to scrutinize how Mamah's trajectory pursuing love, self-discovery, and independence was impacted by her interactions with the houses exposed in the novel through the analysis of ekphrastic excerpts.

Overall, as the novel is focused on Mamah, this character's architectural perceptions are fundamental to her trajectory while she searches for love, self-discovery, and independence. However, Frank played a relevant role as he was the one who introduced her to architecture and he was the one who made her house dreams concrete, so she could finally feel she had a home. Therefore, the objective of this final paper, as already mentioned, is to analyze three important houses for Mamah's trajectory: *The Good Times House* – where she met Frank and fell in love; *The Strand* – where she was able to picture details of how she wished that Frank built their house and how she wanted her home to be; and *Taliesin* – where they built their house that is also a home and she began her search for independence. Ergo, this work will investigate how Mamah's trajectory seeking for love, self-discovery and independence is connected around architecture. Therefore, we will analyze how her encounter with the spaces of these three houses verbalized in the novel are important for the character's development.

To finish contextualizing this research, it is necessary to mention the results achieved so far. The *Iniciação Científica* from which this work derived from encompassed the analysis of the two first houses mentioned above – *The Good Times House* and *The Strand* – and culminated in an article entitled "Seeking space for love, self-discovery, and independence in *Loving Frank*, by Nancy Horan" (Resende, 2023). It is worth stating, also, that this research received an award from XXI *Congresso de Produção Científica e Acadêmica da UFSJ* (Resende, 2024). This final paper, then, comprises the revised analysis from the two houses investigated on *Iniciação Científica* and delves into examining the third house – *Taliesin* – which was the house that Mamah and Frank dreamed about, planning the design of the space where they would live together, materializing in a house their trajectory and turning their home a concrete reality. Hence, this work focus on the analysis of the house that became their home: *Taliesin*.

Besides that, it is essential to highlight that *Loving Frank* (Horan, 2007) is a historical fiction since Nancy Horan (2007) researched about the characters, but "took small liberties with matters of chronology, [some characters, and scenes]" (p. 371). In this way, the

characters and houses portrayed in the novel are historical figures as the author inspired herself in biographical facts to write it as fiction. That is why we contextualized in this final paper some historical figures, such as Mamah Borthwick, Ellen Key, and Frank Lloyd Wright. However, it is fundamental to state that this analysis in only concerned about the novel, as we used the architectural ekphrases in order to grasp how Mamah's trajectory evolved through love, self-discovery, and search for independence being connected around the three houses presented in the novel: *The Good Times House*; *The Strand*; and *Taliesin*.

2 THE NOVEL *LOVING FRANK*

Loving Frank by Nancy Horan (2007) is a historical fiction novel that narrates the story of Mamah Borthwick, who was born on June 19, 1869, and died on August 15, 1914. The novel tells her life from 1907, when she met Frank Lloyd Wright and started her love affair, to 1914, when she was brutally murdered by one of her employees at *Taliesin*, the same fact that was responsible for the house to be partially burned by flames. Although inspired by the historical personalities and facts, it is important to highlight that the novel is fictional: Horan (2007) researched about the characters using letters and news, but wrote the novel fictionally, changing some aspects of chronology and adding some characters to the story.

Mamah Borthwick Cheney used to live at an old Queen Anne house on Oak Park Avenue, which had belonged to her parents, with her former husband, her children, her niece, and her sister. By living in Oak Park – next to Chicago – Mamah and Edwin Cheney decided to hire the architect Frank Lloyd Wright who had designed the house of one of their friends. As Mamah Cheney participated actively in the designing and construction process, her discussions with the architect got deeper and more meaningful which culminated in their close friendship and further love affair.

At some point, Frank invited Mamah to travel with him to Europe and, after a lot of emotional conflict, she decided to leave Edwin Cheney and pursue her love. While in Europe, news at Oak Park and Chicago made public her private life. Worried about her children and sister facing public pressure and also suffering from how she was depicted and from the lies about herself and her family on the news, she found a book from Ellen Key, a Swedish feminist philosopher, and met her ideas about divorce and love inside and outside marriage.

Mamah was a reflexive and studious person. She earned both a Bachelor and a Master of Arts from the University of Michigan, being involved with the Woman Movement throughout her whole life. After having the opportunity to talk to Ellen Key at the end of a speech she had attended to, Mamah offered herself to be the English translator of the feminist in the United States. The two women agreed to have a partnership and Mamah traveled to improve her Swedish at The University of Leipzig, besides teaching there for a while. At this moment, she lived apart from Frank, who had gone back to the United States to take care of his children and to try to get his name respected again as an architect after the scandal created by the news and public opinion.

When Mamah went back to the United States, she and Frank started living together in Wisconsin and built *Taliesin* for them to live. Mamah Borthwick finally reached an agreement with Edwin Cheney and was able to divorce him. After they agreed upon this matter, Mamah started receiving her children every summer to visit her. In the end, one of their employees got furious at her after she fired him, which led to the murdering of some workmen, Mamah and her children, and to the arson fire that partially burned their home. Additionally, it is necessary to state that throughout her life, Mamah translated The Morality of Woman, and Other Essays and The Woman Movement (Gutenberg, 2023), both by Ellen Key.

The historical figure Ellen Key was a Swedish feminist who was born in 1849 and died in 1926. Key was a philosopher who wrote books, articles, essays, and reviews about many different fields, such as education, literature and art, religion and politics, women's suffrage and the question of marriage (Lengborn, 2000). Still according to Thorbjörn Lengborn (2000), "the authors who were to have the greatest impact on Ellen Key's educational views were Rousseau, Goethe, Nietzsche, Comte, Mill and Spencer" (p. 3). It is also necessary to add that "she grew up in an atmosphere of liberalism. During the 1870s her political beliefs were radically liberal. She was republican minded and the idea of freedom was important to her" (Lengborn, 2000, p. 2). Besides that, the author also states that Key discussed individualism and socialism, contrasting egoism with cooperation/altruism. To this extent, Lengborn (2000) affirms that Ellen Key agreed with "Nietzsche's strong emphasis on the rights of the individual and of the personality" (p. 3). In the novel, Mamah also notices this philosophical stream of thought when she reads *Love and Marriage* by Ellen Key. She affirms that what she likes about Key "is that she champions a woman's freedom to realize her personality" (Horan, 2007, p. 129) and highlights that "for the longest time, it seems

there's been almost no discussion of individualism in the Woman Movement" (Horan, 2007, p. 129). Briefly stating, Mamah emphasized that the feminist philosopher was worried about "the deeper question of what a woman is and what she can be" (Horan, 2007, p. 129), which makes the reader realize Key's view on individualism in the Woman Movement.

According to The Museum of Modern Art (MOMA, 2023), the historical figure Frank Lloyd Wright was a "pragmatist, technical innovator, and independent thinker, [who] designed cities and buildings and their interior furnishings across a prolific 72-year career, reflecting his vision of an ideal American society" (online). About his life background, he was "raised in rural Wisconsin in a family of Unitarians" (online). When Wright relocated to Chicago, he "gained experience in various architectural practices, most notably with Louis Sullivan, [from whom …] he absorbed an appreciation for technology and engineering—and for Sullivan's exuberant organic ornament [...]" (online). It was in 1893 that "Wright established his independent practice, [...] becoming the leading figure of the so-called Prairie School of architecture" (online). Being one of the leading figures of the modernist movement in architecture in the United States, "he drew inspiration from many sources, including nature; Platonic geometric shapes underlying the theory and methods of the 19th century educator Friedrich Froebel; and the abstraction inherent in the art and architecture of Japan, where he first traveled in 1905" (online). Besides all his influence in architecture, in the novel, Frank had a major influence on Mamah throughout the narrative, since he was the one who introduced her to architectural concepts and the one who had a huge impact on her life's trajectory shift.

3 MAMAH'S HOUSES: SEEKING FOR LOVE, SELF-DISCOVERY, AND INDEPENDENCE

As it is possible to realize by the plot summary given previously, *Loving Frank* (Horan, 2007) is focalized on Mamah's life and on her social challenges to find freedom in love for her and other women. However, the third person narrator in this novel allowed the studying of architectural ekphrasis through this historical fiction. Ellen Key's ideals, discussed and translated by Mamah, permeate the lives involved in this narrative and instigate the novel's reader. In this way, the architectural ekphrases connect the space(s) of the three houses presented in the novel to this relevant social and philosophical context symbolized in

Mamah's pursue for love, self-discovery, and independence through the architectural environments called *The Good Times House*, *The Strand*, and *Taliesin*.

Mamah Borthwick Cheney used to live with Edwin Cheney at her parents' old Queen Anne house. Edwin Cheney was first interested in asking Frank Lloyd Wright to design a project for a new house, whereas Mamah had been reluctant about the change. At first, Cheney took his wife to see Arthur Huestly's house – one of Cheney's friends. Afterwards, the couple had a first interview with Frank; then, Mamah was convinced about the project for the new house, named *The Good Times House* by the architect. Mamah actively participated in the designing and construction process of the house with all members of Frank's team, as she became interested about this topic. This first contact with architecture and with the architect shifted Mamah's life perspectives and she fell in love with Frank. This and, furthermore, the decision of traveling to Europe with him were a big transformation into Mamah Borthwick's life trajectory.

Later on in the narrative, the main character visited and described Ellen Key's house: *The Strand*. This passage showed how Mamah went from only thinking in abstract about a house for her and Frank to picturing how she wanted her home to be and how she wanted it to feel. In this way, through the relationship between Mamah and this architectural site, it is possible to not only analyze architectural ekphrasis, but also grasp and contextualize her social history and personal relationship with the feminist movement related to love inside and outside marriage discussed by Key and translated by Mamah. However, it is fundamental to add that throughout this passage Mamah was constantly thinking about Frank and considering him as the one responsible for designing and building this house. Hence, Mamah dreamed about their home, but Frank was the responsible for building houses.

In such wise, Frank's importance was always present in Mamah's dreams and thoughts as she believed him to be the one to whom she would share her feelings and expectations in order to together turn not only their house, but also their home into reality. Moreover, in the novel there are the ekphrases of the construction process of *Taliesin* – the house they built in Wisconsin and lived there as their home for about four years. Thus, there are also excerpts that deserve close analysis from which it will be possible to compare the dreams inspired in Mamah by Ellen Key's ideals represented through the house known as *The Strand* to what actually became Mamah and Frank's house and home: *Taliesin*.

3.1. THE FIRST TRANSFORMATION: FROM OLD QUEEN ANNE TO *THE GOOD TIMES HOUSE*

Even though it was said that the narrative has a third person narrator, before the first chapter there are some pages written in italics signed by Mamah Bouton Borthwick in 1914 – the year in which Mamah was murdered. We believe, then, that these are some of her journal pages where she reflects about the beginning of her journey with Frank: the transformation from her parents' Old Queen Anne into *The Good Times House*.

Edwin and Mamah Cheney got married in 1899 and started living in "*the house [Mamah had grown] up in for the sake of [her] widowed father, who had never adjusted to living alone*" (Horan, 2007, p. 3, italics in the original). They used to live at an "*old Queen Anne [house] on Oak Park Avenue*" and Mamah "*didn't mind*" living there: "*It was full of the things of [her] childhood, and [she found] it comforting after so many years away*" (Horan, 2007, p. 3, italics in the original). Ultimately, it was Edwin Cheney who "*was possessed by the idea of having something modern*" (Horan, 2007, p. 3, italics in the original). About that, it is relevant to highlight Gaston Bachelard's (1994) utterance that "we comfort ourselves by reliving memories of protection. Something closed must retain our memories, while leaving them their original value as images" (p. 6) to affirm that this old Queen Anne house was retaining her childhood and her parents' memories.

Mamah, then, continued by mentioning that "*the only thing Edwin [had] never been able to abide [was] disorder*" and supposed that it was "*the lack of it, that finally pushed him to do something beyond talk about a new house*" (Horan, 2007, p. 4, italics in the original). She declared that she had "*tried to keep things neat*", but complained that nothing could be done "*about a dark old place with windows painted shut and fretwork curlicues cluttering the corners of every door frame*" and "*about horsehair-stuffed furniture with two decades of dust that simply [couldn't] be pounded out*" (p. 4, italics in the original), which can be interpreted symbolically for not only objects, but also the traditional beliefs of her parents. On account of all this, Mamah was pushed into breaking with her traditional parents' house and getting a new, modern one from the architect Frank Lloyd Wright.

As soon as Mamah and Edwin Cheney had an interview with the architect, "*Edwin didn't have to prod anymore*" (Horan, 2007, p. 6, italics in the original). Mamah "*took on the job of working with Frank, who seemed delighted by [her] tentative suggestions*" (p. 6, italics in the original). In such a manner, she "*started to comprehend cantilevered roofs and the*

rhythmic beauty of hands of leaded windows he called 'light screens'" and "*pretty soon [she] was part of the team*", spending "*hours dreaming up a garden plan with a landscape architect, Walter Griffin, at the studio*" (p. 6-7, italics in the original). "*By the time [they] moved into 'the good times house', as Frank had called it from the beginning, [they] counted the Wrights among [their] friends*" (p. 7, italics in the original). As it is possible to realize, Frank was the one responsible for, as an architect, grasping what the couple had in mind and translating it into the construction process. In this way, it was him who concretized their wishes for rebuilding their house.

It is essential to state that architecture is developed through a dynamic communicative undertaking, since, according to Miriam Vieira (2021a), "the communication between those involved [in an architectural process] (client, architect, engineer, technicians, construction workers, and others) in relation to the edifice's modality modes is key to the fulfillment of [these] process" (p. 61). On the authority of Jørgen Bruhn (2016), the term medialities is used to discuss media as "specified clusters of communicative forms" (p. 17) that "may be briefly defined as tools of communicative action inside or outside the arts" (p. 17). Hence, once again in accordance with Vieira (2021a), "when understood as a process, architecture may be considered a medium due to its inherent potential to store communication" (p. 61). In this way, she states that "every stage is accomplished through specific qualified submedia (graphic and technical representations) that not only 'crave' for transmediation but also operate as part of a predetermined hierarchical process" (Vieira, 2021a, p. 61), being, then, the client's thoughts and wishes for a house one of the first steps these process. Thus, as Vieira (2021a) writes, "the material modality concerns both the physical materiality and the mental relationship involved" (p. 64) in the process. Because of that, the architect is the one who translates what is in the client's mind. In the case of Frank and Mamah's relationship, they got so synchronized during this process that it culminated in their close friendship and further love affair.

Therefore, "if architecture is to be understood as a process spanning several stages, materiality will also manifest itself inside the minds of those involved in said process" (Vieira, 2021a, p. 64). Frank Lloyd Wright was, then, the one responsible for concretizing Mamah and Edwin Cheney's desires while they sketched and built *The Good Times House*, yet all three had been part of the architectural process. Besides, as Miriam Vieira (2021a) utters, "in architecture, communication and human experience do not endure virtually, as in

literature; they happen, effectively, within a materialized space" (p. 66). In this way, several aspects are part of the architectural process, including the wishes and desires from the client's mind being translated to a sketch by the architect, the communication between client and architect during the construction, and both client's and architect's interaction with the architectural site during and after the building undertaking. That is why, after presenting about Mamah's context and her beliefs about this house, we will discuss her experience while interacting with *The Good Times House*.

As a child, Mamah described herself as "wild" (Horan, 2007, p. 18): her "father was an amateur naturalist" and he used to take Mamah and her sisters down "a dry stream near Kankakee to hunt for fossils" (p. 18). However, while describing her childhood to Frank, she confessed that this "worried her mother to death" (p. 18) since "she preferred finding God in the second pew of Grace Episcopal Church" (p. 18). Mamah affirmed that "it unnerved her [mother] to see her daughters smashing rocks with hammers" as "she was wary of trilobites and Darwin and her father's talk of the 'human animal'" (p. 18). Nevertheless, even though she had also been worried about her sisters, Mamah believed that her mother had fretted even more about herself as "she thought [Mamah] was far too… dreamy, [Mamah guesses], or suggestible" (p. 18), illustrating it by recounting the time in which her father had brought home a telescope: her mother, after taking "a good long look through it" (p. 19) said to her father: "Don't show Mamah. It will be overwhelming for her." (p. 19). All this is relevant to emphasize her mother's beliefs and to understand Mamah's personality in opposition to the traditional social expectations of her time.

Furthermore in the narrative, Mamah mentioned again her assumptions about her mother's worries, now to her friend Mattie. She affirmed that she wished her mother had seen her getting married, as "none of [her mother's daughters] was married when she began falling" (Horan, 2007, p. 74). Mamah had a Bachelor of Arts from Michigan University, and, even though she agreed with Mattie that, at first, her mother had been proud about herself and her sisters studying, Mamah believed that "she was disappointed at the end" (p. 74), since "off they went to work" (p. 74) instead of getting married: "She came to think that education had made [them] unsuited for marriage" (p. 74). All her mother's conjectures represented the traditions of that time. Therefore, although Mamah disagreed with that by supporting the Woman Movement and wished for "much more personal freedom to gain beyond [the suffrage]" (p. 74), these traditional expectations placed pressure on her.

Moreover, it is relevant to mention Mamah's daydreams set while she lived at "*Mrs. Sanborn's boardinghouse house on Seventh Street*" (Horan, 2007, p. 5, italics in the original) in Port Huron after finishing her studies at the university and before getting married to Edwin Cheney. About those years, she confessed that "*while [she] was teaching at the high school and, later, running the library, [she] romanticized what [she] did by day—handmaiden to knowledge, doctor of the soul, dispensing books like pills to my students and patrons.* [...]" (Horan, 2007, p. 5, italics in the original). These daydreams indicate that she already had the desire to do something bigger, to impact the soul of others around her, especially women. That is confirmed by the following excerpt, since it shows her contradictory night feeling of piles of unfinished works around her in her room.

> […] *At night, though, [she] lived uneasily among stacks of papers in [her] room; a long, unfinished essay on individualism in the Woman Movement, an unpublished translation of some eighteenth-century French essayist who had possessed [her] for a while, books upon books with pages marked by newspaper clippings, envelopes, pencils, postcards, hair combs [and even] despite great bursts of energy, [she] couldn't seem to put together a proper magazine article, let alone the book [she had] imagined [she] would eventually write* (HORAN, 2007, p. 5, italics in the original).

In this context, Edwin Cheney started coming from Chicago regularly in order to visit her at the boarding house. Mamah revealed, then, that Edwin Cheney "*had a gift for small talk and an infectious laugh*" (Horan, 2007, p. 5), which made him "*win over the inhabitants of Mrs. Sanborn's boardinghouse house*" (p. 5, italics in the original). About that, it is essential to state that Mamah admitted that, "*to [her] dismay*" (p. 5, italics in the original), when "*he began to show up on Friday evenings, the landlady and her little family of renters [...] cleared out of the parlor so the relationship could blossom*" (p. 5, italics in the original). In this way, the literary and reflexive aspiring feminist kept daydreaming about leaving her mark while actually conforming herself to her nighttime frustrations and to the restraints of tradition symbolized in her mother's beliefs, especially about marriage.

Therefore, when reflecting about the fact that, "*at thirty, after years of study and solitude and independence, [she] found [herself] sharing dinners not only with a new husband but also with [her] father and [her] sisters, Jessie and Lizzie*" (Horan, 2007, p. 3, italics in the original), she also realized that, "*in the three years [she] had been married, it hadn't been so hard to be Mrs. Edwin Cheney*" (p. 3, italics in the original). However, their strengths were very different, as Mamah was literary and reflective while Edwin Cheney "*was a good man and he got things done*" (p. 5, italics in the original). These excerpts are

fundamental to the reader's understanding of Mamah's conformity. She got used to being married, and it was not difficult, until she met Frank.

Altogether, taking down her parents' house was also the milestone for her first life transformation, swifting the flow of following traditional expectations. About this matter, it is relevant that Mamah admitted that "*[she had] said yes to a new house the way [she had] said yes to the balding young man who kept traveling from Chicago to Port Huron to ask [her] to marry him. After a point, [she] just plunged in*" (Horan, 2007, p. 5, italics in the original). That is why, Mamah wondered if Edwin had reflected "*on the fact that it was he who craved the place entirely his own*" (p. 3, italics in the original). Falling in love with Frank, getting to know his beliefs about modernist architecture while sharing "deep discussions" that "were a stark contrast to her discourse with Edwin" (p. 16) made Mamah take a first step in her pursuit for freedom of love. All that is symbolized by putting down her parents' old Queen Anne house.

Having mentioned Mamah's emotional background related to this first house, we will present two excerpts in which she observed and interacted with *The Good Times House*. The first excerpt is from the first chapter when, after coming on foot from a lecture Frank had given, "she paused on the sidewalk to look at her house" (Horan, 2007, p. 11). Mamah, then, observed as the "tiny iridescent squares in the stained-glass windows glinted back the late-afternoon sun" (p. 11-12) while memories of the open house day came back to her mind: "She remembered standing in this very spot three years ago, during an open house she and Ed had given after they'd moved in. Women had been sitting along the terrace wall, gazing out toward the street, calling to their children, their faces lit like a row of moons" (p. 12). It is important to state that this is a contemplative architectural ekphrasis of the house, since the character is on the same spot focalizing the house while memories emerged on her mind.

About that, Vieira's (2021a) interpretative model proposal "encompasses [...] horizontal and non-hierarchical typologies" (p. 72), being the contemplative one of its typologies. For Vieira, "there are cases in literature wherein characters *contemplate* architectural environments, buildings, or even urban landscapes from a specific point of view, without the focalizing agent physically interacting with the focalized architectural site" (p. 73, emphasis added), which is the case of the passage when Mamah observes *The Good Times House* exemplified in the previous paragraph. Vieira continues, then, that "here the notion of perspective plays a highly relevant role, since it is the focalizer's relation to the architectural

site that will determine its contemplative nature" (p. 73). In this case, there is only emotional interaction with the house, as memories ran through Mamah while she contemplated it from a fixed viewpoint.

Furthermore, Mamah, who had lived in the previous old Queen Anne house and who had participated actively in the designing and construction process, stopped on the same spot she had been three years before and reflected upon the house: "it had struck Mamah then that her low slunk house looked as small as a raft beside the steamerlike Victorian next door. But what a spectacular raft, with the 'Maple Leaf Rag' drifting out of its front doors, and people draped along its edges" (Horan, 2007, p. 12). Mamah, then, remembered Edwin Cheney joining her contemplative moment three years before, but their perspectives were different as "his face was beaming that day, so full of pride and the excitement of a new beginning", for "Mamah, though, the housewarming had felt like the end of something extraordinary" (p. 12). In this also contemplative architectural ekphrasis it is essential to realize how Edwin Cheney and Mamah had different perspectives towards the house. As we have been demonstrating, they had different personalities, and, at this moment, it is possible to perceive that their differences seemed to be intensifying as they were getting apart, since Mamah resented leaving this extraordinary experience to go back to her old conformity routine.

The second analyzed excerpt is from chapter two when Mamah's daughter "grabbed hold of her mother's thumbs and walked haltingly down the hall toward the living room" (Horan, 2007, p. 13). In this passage, Mamah did not simply contemplate her house but she interacted with it as, once "the west windows and the heavy woodwork conspired to make the living room dark" by this time of the year, "Mamah aimed her daughter toward the adjoining library, where sun streamed through a south-facing window" (p. 13). In relation to theoretical aspects, Vieira (2021a) explains that "since embodiment plays a crucial role in the understanding of architecture as both process and media product, one may identify passages in which the observer, be it the narrator or a character, takes full advantage of the architectural medialities presented thus far" (p. 73). Thus, this passage is considered a performative type of architectural ekphrasis, in which the observer interacts and moves through the house, activating different sensorial facets.

Vieira (2021a) continues that "in such cases, all modalities, along with embodiment, have an impact on the characters' *performative* actions while touring an architectural site—going up and down, in, out, and around it", and, that is why "the reader ceases to be a mere

spectator and becomes involved in a virtual performance" (p. 73, emphasis added). Retracing back to the narrative, on the adjoining library Mamah "paused to stand in the light" (Horan, 2007, p. 13-14). The reader can, then, perceive through the ekphrasis that "warmth felt like joy itself to Mamah", which makes the reader go, together with Mamah, inside the whirlwind memories as "it seemed that sometimes, when the sun hit her face in just this way, her skin had its own memory", then, she "could be 5 years old again, looking out at the summer fields from the window of the Iowa farmhouse where [she]'d been born" (p. 14). Therefore, it is possible to realize that this passage is an example of, according to Vieira's interpretative model, a performative architectural ekphrasis.

Therefore, through the analysis of the context of *The Good Times House*, important aspects of Mamah's trajectory can be highlighted. This, together with her reflections and interactions towards the house, can be used as a central thread that considers the three houses to observe how her journey is constructed and reconstructed throughout the novel. As previously stated, this first house was a watershed on Mamah's life since it symbolically represents her courageous step to pursue her love for Frank, going against the traditional expectations of that time.

3.2. LONGING FOR A HOME: WHERE *THE STRAND* OF LIFE'S SEA TOUCHES THE SOUL

By working together in the construction process of *The Good Times House*, Mamah and Frank developed a close friendship that culminated in a love affair. Mamah and Edwin Cheney had a relationship based on stability, which was in conformity to traditional expectations towards men and women roles at the time. About that, Mamah recalled on the preface that he promised to be her anchor by saying "*Take my love for granted [...] and I shall do the same for you*" (Horan, 2007, p. 7, italics in the original). Such words Mamah considered "*a recipe for disaster*" (p. 7, italics in the original) in her journal in August 1914. With Frank, however, Mamah "knew they'd grown too close" (p. 16) when she "found herself saving up insights to tell Frank—thoughts she never would have shared with her husband" (p. 16). It is possible to realize in these excerpts that Mamah and Frank's relationship was based in discussions and that the dreamer soul inside Mamah craved for talking to him, something she got used to not doing with Edwin Cheney.

After some time of having an affair, Frank invited Mamah to travel with him to

Europe. Mamah, then, had a lot of emotional conflict to decide. Meanwhile, she told Edwin Cheney about their affair and departed in order to visit her old friend Mattie who had been pregnant, so she could try to organize herself and make a decision. About this conflict, at some point, she wrote in her diary that "*[she had] been standing on the side of life, watching it float by. [She wanted] to swim in the river. [She wanted] to feel the current*" (Horan, 2007, p. 35, italics in the original). Hence, she resolved to move to Europe. As this happened, her story got exposed in local newspapers at Chicago and Oak Park, where she was accused of doing terrible things and where she and her family were falsely portrayed.

In the middle of all internal emotional conflict and external public disapproval, Mamah met Ellen Key's ideals and got embraced by them. In this way, after spending most of her time reading *Love and Marriage* – the first book from Ellen Key she had contact with, "it was as if Mamah Cheney, the troubled woman in the headlines, had ceased to exist" (Horan, 2007, p. 130). After attending a lecture from the feminist philosopher, Mamah had the opportunity to talk to her about her life story and beliefs. During this conversation, Ellen Key aroused Mamah to consider her necessities and initiatives by instigating her to follow her "spiritual quest" (p. 134) in order to discover "who [she was] and where [she] want[ed] to go" (135). Because of that, Key questioned Mamah about her job and Mamah offered herself to become her translator. That journey involved studying Swedish at the University of Leipzig and translating some essays from Ellen Key.

In the end, Ellen Key played an important role on Mamah's journey into discovering her own path and identity. That is why in "translating Ellen's essays [Mamah] had found more than peace of mind. She had discovered the state of her soul set down in ink" (Horan, 2007, p. 137). At this moment she lived apart from Frank as he had been in Italy working with architecture there and, when Mamah finished her Swedish studies and was about to join him, Key invited "her to visit her new home on Lake Vattern" (p. 147). Mamah, then, contacted Frank and extended some of more their time apart in order to visit Ellen Key's new house.

When Mamah arrived "in Alvestra" (Horan, 2007, p. 148), where Ellen Key's house was set, there is an ekphrastic passage that narrates how this arrival happened. Mamah was "ferried [...] by wagon to Ellen's house, which was set just above Lake Vattern, then let [...] into the front door [...]" (p. 148). In this performative ekphrastic excerpt the reader is conducted together with Mamah to her first experience approaching the house. However, as "she stood in the hallway with white walls [...]" (p. 148) this extract from the book shifts into

a contemplative ekphrasis as Mamah stopped to observe the entrance while important aspects related to the house were mentioned. These important aspects involved "[...] a redbrick floor, and rows of freshly painted red doors along its sides. Near the ceiling ran a stenciled frieze of green garland. Above the front door, painted in red, were the words MEMENTO VIVERE. Remember to live" (p. 148). Both the color pattern and the philosophical facets of the house are emphasized in a way that the chosen design embraced the encouragement for living, for remembering the guest to live truly, to struggle to be who they were, to find freedom of personality.

Then, Mamah met Ellen Key who welcomed and asked her to "sign [her] guest book" (Horan, 2007, p. 148), telling her that she had been "one of the first" (p. 148) to visit *The Strand*. This is followed by another ekphrastic excerpt when Mamah reflected about how this house reminded her of Key's writing style as "[s]he had not only read Ellen's book Beauty for Everyone, but in the rooms, she saw her 'light and healthy' aesthetic" (p. 148). Thus, *The Strand* translated Key's personality in its design. In the house, there were "Gustavian furniture painted pearly gray" (p. 148) and "[f]olk crafts scattered all around" (p. 148) that caught Mamah's eyes. "Every window in the house open to the June breeze" (p. 148) showed how the open space was important to Mamah. At this moment, Mamah observed the house and "pondered over the next five days" (p. 148) that "a woman [making] a house like this, on her own, was a wonder" (p. 148). The interaction with the house intrigued Mamah about the reason that led Ellen Key to "name [her] home strand" (p. 148). It is important to notice here that Mamah used the word home to refer to this house, indicating that the feeling this house provoked on her led her thinking of it as a home.

In order to answer why this house was named *The Strand*, which means "a coast, a shore" (Cambridge, 2023, online), Ellen Key "let Mamah back out into the hallway and pointed to a framed map of the Vattern area [where p]ainted in blue and yellow letters above it were the words DÄR LIVETS HAV OSS GETT EN STRAND" (Horan, 2007, p. 148), translated "Where life's sea has given us a strand" (Horan, 2007, p. 148). It is a very significant name, since Key had confessed to Mamah that she was "tired of the nomad life" (Horan, 2007, p. 135), which relates to its meaning of coast or shore, in other words, a place in which you rest after a long journey on life's sea. Ellen Key also stated that she was "building a home now" (Horan, 2007, p. 136) and affirmed that "when [her] house [was] completed, [she intended] to inhabit it" (Horan, 2007, p. 136). This can also be related to

Gaston Bachelard's (1994) concept for home, as he utters that "all really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home" (p. 5). These two women, Mamah and Ellen Key, both shared the personality of adventurous and reflexive women, they also had in common the fact that they were seeking for self-discovery. Because of that, they had the desire of having a place of their own, of finding in their home freedom to be who they were, to have freedom of personality.

Mamah and Key's similarity is emphasized by their understanding of the notion of home and by the fact that *The Strand* made Mamah picture how she wanted her home to be and what feelings she wanted it to provoke. It was visiting *The Strand*, then, that Mamah "could picture some details" (Horan, 2007, p. 149) about the house she wanted "for herself and Frank" (p. 149) and affirmed that "in the past, she had thought only in the abstract about [it]" (p. 149). Thus, visiting this house provoking home feelings, Mamah pictured how she wanted to have a place of their own, for her and Frank to live together, truly as they were, free to love and to be who they were. However, it is important to state that it was Frank, as the architect, who "would make it a miracle of light and space" (p. 149) translating her dreams into a concrete house. "And she would make it feel the way this place felt" (p. 149), in other words, she would turn it into the home she could now aspire.

Later, Ellen Key defined in her own words that it was "[her] quiet Strand" (Horan, 2007, p. 148) as they had been "sitting near the lake on a bench in a circular columned portico that perched atop some rocks just above the waterline" (p. 148). This conversation aroused a contemplative reflection in which Key affirmed "[she'd] been sitting out [t]here lately, thinking that [she] want[ed] to make *[The] Strand* a kind of legacy once [she was] gone" (p. 148, emphasis added), as she wanted it to be "a heaven for workingwomen who need a rest" (p. 148). Some time later, when Mamah was "sitting in the sun-filled room, a lake breeze quivering the beech leaves outside, she was struck by the honor of being among the first guests at *Strand*" (p. 150, emphasis added). The reader, as well, experiences through Mamah's words the feelings *The Strand* produced on her skin. In this way, by contemplating the scenario, the kinesthetic experience complemented her perception, leading Mamah to feel honored to be in that place as a guest. In a contemplative ekphrasis, then, it is possible that a sensorial perception activates a sensation that impacts one's memories and sentiments.

Altogether, we can realize that it was through the interaction to *The Strand* that Mamah and Ellen Key delved into conversations and reflections about their wishes for women

to have freedom of personality. Therefore, even though it was not designed by Frank, the house called *The Strand* is fundamental in Mamah's life trajectory, since it is there that she could imagine her home concretely – the one Frank would be responsible for designing and building. In this house, Mamah could perceive how she wanted to feel in her home and this had a great impact on her as she sought for self-discovery.

3.3. SEEKING INDEPENDENCE THROUGH LOVE AND SELF-DISCOVERY: MATERIALIZING *TALIESIN*

Taliesin was the house Mamah and Frank Lloyd Wright built and lived in together. For a long time after Mamah had left, seeking her love for Frank, trying to discover who she was and what she wanted to be through her studies and translations of Ellen Key's texts, she could not feel she had a "home anymore" (Horan, 2007, p. 159). However, after actively dreaming and participating in the construction and details of the house, she could feel that "*Taliesin* [was her] home" (p. 278, emphasis added). Mamah even stated, when Frank had a job opportunity that could involve moving to Japan for around one year, that "[a]fter all these months and years of not knowing where [she] would be, or where [she] even *wanted* to be, all [she could] think about [was] going back there" (p. 278, italics in the original). Because of that, *Taliesin* became their home and it is the product of their lifelong trajectory.

At first, Mamah and Frank did not agree about where their home would be. Mamah wanted it to be in Italy since she did not consider that she had a "home anymore. [Therefore, a]t least in Italy [she could be] anonymous" (Horan, 2007, p. 159). Besides that, Mamah fell in love with the Italian landscapes around Fiesole, surrounded by the Arno river, when they lived close to Villa Medici. Frank, however, wanted it to be in Wisconsin as his "family [went] back three generations in that valley" (p. 158). Because of that, he believed people would "be civil" (p. 158) about their relationship, besides considering that the place where they would live in Wisconsin was "utterly private, only three hours by train from Chicago[, and their] children [would] come to stay with [them]" (p. 158). In this way, for him, being close to his family and to where he had grown up were the most important aspects related to where he wanted to live. It is interesting to indicate that even as transgressive and innovative as he was, his family tradition was very important to him. Additionally, it is relevant to emphasize that Mamah's wishes were not very much considered.

About this matter, Frank was really determined to have his house in Wisconsin, hence

Mamah did not have much voice about this. Even before the discussion about it, he had "already written to [his] mother" (Horan, 2007, p. 158) about the possibility of her buying the land he wanted for him. Mamah could only, by the end of this first discussion, appeal that "[j]ust for [her]" (Horan, 2007) Frank would "design a home for them" (p. 159) in Fiesole, Italy. In this way, this design was sketched considering mostly Frank's dreams of going back to Wisconsin, but it was also slightly inspired in Mamah's wishes of living close to the Arno river, as he mentioned the house would have "a courtyard like the one [they] saw at Villa Medici" (p. 158). Thus, the project was inspired to some degree by Villa Medici and the landscapes from Fiesole in Italy.

This first discussion came into being after Frank showed Mamah a sketch of the house. As it is part of the architectural process, it is an ekphrasis that narrates the moment he

> took from a small bag a blue colored pencil he'd bought to add to a collection he'd begun in Berlin. He quickly sharpened it with a small knife he carried in his breast pocket, then drew an irregularly curving line on the white cloth and sketched some rectangles pressed into the curve. He was drawing upside down for her benefit, but the geometric forms were clearly parts of a house set into the side of a hill. More curving lines appeared, outlining a river and more hills. […] Frank continued to draw, penciling in trees and roads. On one hill, he covered the curves with patchwork gardens. (Horan, 2007, p. 157)

On this ekphrasis, Mamah was mostly observing. Yet, as he drew, she revealed that she "thought this was the Arno" (Horan, 2007, p. 157), but Frank told her it was "a river, but not the Arno. It [was] the Wisconsin River" (p. 157). According to this design project, the house would back "itself up into [the] hillside and ha[ve] wings that embrace[d] the hill. It [would be] made of the same limestone that pushes out of the earth all over Wisconsin, so it [would look] like a great outcrop of rock" (p. 158). And in this house project someone would "walk from indoor room to outdoor room and never even feel where the house ends and the fresh air begins" (p. 158). As the design project came from Frank's insight drawing, it is possible to realize that it came mostly from the architect's expectations, leaving Mamah considerably out of this part of the process.

In this way, Mamah's wishes are sparsely considered as Frank tried to convince her about his sketch by mentioning some of her interests and hobbies on the project, such as: "You'll have gardens all around you" (Horan, 2007, p. 158); "We'll grow our own food and ribbons across the hills." (p. 158); and "[...] you can translate, garden, do what you love" (p. 158). Though, as "[he] dream[ed] about this house all the time" (p. 158), the design came

mostly from what he had dreamed about. Mamah's influences on the house project were very subtle and came mostly from Frank's interpretation of what she liked and wanted in the house. After this first design, taking into consideration Mamah's request of living in Italy, Frank designed a house in this same style but located in Fiesole, surrounded by the Arno river and its hills.

One day, Mamah "walked over to Frank, putting one hand on his shoulder to glance at what he was working on" (Horan, 2007, p. 160) and "caught [him]" (p. 160) "[...] working on a pair of drawings arranged on a single page, one above the other" (p. 160). He wanted "both of [the two drawings]" (p. 161) he had designed "for her" (p. 161) on one lithograph plate: the first one was "Marion Mahoney's elaborately drawn foliage curled around the corners of the picture and spilled over the terrace wall. It was the very drawing that had sold her and Edwin on Frank's design back in 1903" (p. 160); and the second "showed a rectilinear house with wide terrace walls that stood probably against a steep hillside. Lettering under the drawing read VILLA FOR ARTIST" (p. 160-161). Even though the second drawing was "just an experiment" (p. 161), according to Frank, as he had been "exploring how a house might fit into the hillside here [in Fiesole] … an organic house" (p. 161), "Mamah allowed herself to imagine a life with Frank in Italy" (p. 162). In her thoughts, their time in Fiesole "would not be a permanent arrangement, but a voluntary exile for a couple of years" (p. 162) and, "[i]n the interim, hopefully, Edwin and Catherine would agree to divorces" (p. 162). Mamah even took a sketch pad under her arm during her "walk up Via Verdi" (p. 161), "intent upon mapping out the unbuilt places in the distant hills" (p. 161), which highlights how excited she was about what this drawing could represent.

However, in the very next day, Frank announced after an emotional moment that "[he was] going back" (Horan, 2007, p. 170); "[n]ot to Catherine[, b]ut to the children" (p. 170). He said "[s]taying [in Fiesole] was impossible to [him]" (p. 170), to which Mamah retorted "Why did you let me believe?" (p. 170). Mamah then communicated to Frank that she had to stay some more time in Europe in order to take more Swedish lessons and told him she "dread[ed] being alone over [there]" (p. 173), but she was "not ready to face the yellow press" (p. 173), stating: "When I go back, I shall be stronger, for everyone concerned" (p. 173). This decision shows her fortitude to search for independence. In this way, she stays again some time alone in Germany.

One day, shortly after she had received the divorce note, Frank visited Mamah. On

that occasion, his mother had "agreed to buy land in her name for [him]" (Horan, 2007, p. 196) on the very "spot [he had] told [her] about" (p. 196). Frank, afterwards, told Mamah it would "be the most beautiful place [she'd] ever lived" (p. 196) and argued that "in Italy all [she] could think of was building a retreat there, away from it all. Well, this [was] a retreat, and every bit as beautiful as Fiesole" (p. 196). After he swore to her "[they would] live true" (p. 197), she smiled and questioned him "Are you asking me?" (p. 197), to which he replied "I am" (p. 197). Then, with the words "Yes, [...] I will" (p. 197), Frank had convinced Mamah to move to Wisconsin after all.

Furthermore, Mamah had her first glimpse of the house in a contemplative architectural ekphrasis:

> In that moment Mamah's eye caught sight of a broad roof, limestone walls, in the sand-gold rectangles of stucco. The house nestled into the hill, wrapping itself around the area just below the rounded crown. Frank pulled the car over to the side of the road. He walked around to open the door for her, and they stood in the tall grass together. Mamah felt the goose bumps rising on her skin. (Horan, 2007, p. 210)

The character observes the house from the same point of view, "without the focalizing agent physically interacting with the focalized architectural site" (Vieira, 2021b, p. 7), therefore it is considered contemplative. In this passage, Mamah, first, described the materials used in the construction which could make the excerpt also be taken as technical architectural ekphrasis, after all there is "the need of technical literacy and/or prior background knowledge of architectural discourse" (Vieira, 2021b, p. 12) to visualized the materials described in the ekphrastic excerpt. Then, she mentioned how the house "nestled into the hill" (Horan, 2007, p. 210). Once "nestled" definition is "to rest yourself or part of your body in a warm, comfortable, and protected position" (Cambridge, online), this relevant choice of word indicates how Mamah could see this house as a home at this moment. Besides that, the view made her feel "goose bumps rising on her skin" (Horan, 2007, p. 210) which emphasized how observing her future home produced a physical emotional response. Since how the character is affected psychologically is important to reveal the impact of the house on the focalizing agent, it is essential to state that this first view of the house had a great impact on Mamah.

It is at this moment that Frank revealed to Mamah what he wanted to name the house: *Taliesin*. He explained: "*Do you know Richard Hovey's play Taliesin? About the Welsh bard who was part of King Arthur's court? He was a truth-seeker and a prophet, Taliesin was. His name meant 'shining brow.' I think it's quite appropriate*" (Horan, 2007, p. 210, italics in the

original). In this way, as brow means "the top part of a hill" (Cambridge, online), *Taliesin* can be seen as responsible for turning the hill it is set into a shining one. Therefore, "the building glowed, in spite of the gray light" (Horan, 2007, p. 210). Moreover, *Taliesin* also marked a watershed in Mamah and Frank's trajectory, thus standing both as a "truth-seeker and a prophet" (Horan, 2007, p. 210). They both had been looking for a place where they could live together as a couple, where they could be true to their love for each other.

About this matter, *Taliesin* represented also how Mamah could now be true to herself, trying to enclose her journey seeking for independence. One of the steps Mamah took to register what was important to her related to the house was to start "a photo album that would tell the story of *Taliesin*" (Horan, 2007, p. 234, emphasis added). That album, however, was still very connected to Frank, since she "wanted to give [it to him] for Christmas" (p. 233-234). At this moment, her search for independence was still very reticent, since Mamah's values – her search for love and self-discovery – had, still, been much attached to both Frank and Ellen Key.

Retracing back to the narrative about *Taliesin*'s view, the word 'house' "seemed somehow wrong" (Horan, 2007, p. 210). *Taliesin* "was like nothing else [Mamah] had ever seen" (p. 210) and, still, it "was more like the villas around Fiesole than anything Frank had built in Oak Park" (p. 210). This house "looked so modern, so architected[, yet] it was harmonious with the hills" (p. 210) as "its overhanging roofs [were] echoing the pitch of the ridge" (p. 210). *Taliesin* was "[e]levated and isolated, away from other houses and set into this great golden vista [...]" (p. 210). In this passage, Mamah is still contemplating the astonishing house, for which she "took off her glasses, squinted, then put them on again" (p. 210) after whispering "It's brilliant" (p. 210). Again there is an emphasis on how she physically reacted to the view of her future home. In that passage, one more time, her visual interaction with the house is highlighted by the description of Mamah's corporeal reaction. Observing her reaction, Frank says "[i]t's for [her]" (p. 210). This moment reveals all the emotion involved in the concretion of the house that is now being constructed to be their home.

This first contemplating moment was followed by a performative one as the "car crept up to a heavy entry column of roughly stacked stone blocks" (Horan, 2007, p. 211). Along the ride, they observed the "Flower in the Crannied Wall" (p. 211) statue "[s]tanding on top of the pier" (p. 211). It "was a soaring statue of a classic-looking nude. The voluptuous curves of her

body melded in white plaster with the straight lines of a skyscraper in front of her. The woman's head was bent, and her hand was placing a capstone at the top of the building" (p. 211). Contemplating the statue, Mamah uttered "[s]he looks magnificent here—like an angel guarding the place" (p. 211). In this ekphrastic passage, even though Mamah and Frank are contemplating the view from the car, it can still be considered performative as they are inside the car moving into the surroundings of the house, guiding the reader to the house.

The performative architectural ekphrasis continues:

> The drive led the car under the roof of the porte cochere, then continued between the house on one side and an incline on the other. Mamah could already imagine clumps of daffodils climbing up that little hill. Ahead, at the end of the driveway, she saw workers coming and going in a courtyard. As she and Frank drew closer, she noticed that windows all along the back of the house faced out toward it. A private courtyard! (Horan, 2007, p. 211)

As the driveway is presented, taking Mamah to the private courtyard for the first time, she could imagine how she wanted the landscape to be. In this excerpt, the fact that her imagination was triggered and the exclamation point in the end of the paragraph reveal Mamah's astonishment about the house.

When Mamah got out of the car and observed *Taliesin*'s building process, there was a shift from a performative type of ekphrasis to a contemplative one, as she stood for an instant observing the construction:

> Workmen stopped to shade their eyes as the car inched along. When Frank opened the car door, they returned to their work, furiously mortaring and hammering as if they hadn't noticed the new arrivals. Mamah wanted to race along the drive into the courtyard, but she stood shock-still instead. No one looked at her. (Horan, 2007, p. 211)

Mamah's excitement is now explicitly divulged to the reader as the narrator says she "wanted to race along the drive into the courtyard" (Horan, 2007, p. 211). However, her excitement merges with surprise as "she stood shock-still instead" (p. 211). Because of this, it is possible to infer that, even though at first Mamah did not want her home to be in Wisconsin, *Taliesin* had a great impact on her. Thus, she could picture how that house would turn out to be and feel enthused about it.

After this moment of contemplation, Frank "walked Mamah through the length of the one-story building" (Horan, 2007, p. 212). Shifting again the ekphrasis to a performative style, as we can observe by the use of the verbs in bold – led, toured, walk, entered – that indicate that the characters are moving around the house:

> [...] The house was really three horizontal rectangles joined together into one

> U-shaped form that wrapped its arms around the hill. One arm of the U was a wing of bedrooms; the arm on the opposite side included barns for horses and cows, plus a garage. In between was the social and working space, a string of rooms with windows that faced out onto vast views of the valley below. In many places, glass doors **led** from the rooms onto terraces surrounding the house.
> Frank **toured** her through the living room, their bedroom, then the bedroom that would be her children's when they visited. He envisioned for her how each room would look. The house was exactly as he had described it, a place where shelter and nature were fused. She could picture how it would be when it was finished. How guests would **walk** through the entryway with its low ceiling that compressed down the space, making them feel a kind of tension. How they would suddenly, physically, feel that tension lift and joy replace it as they **entered** the expansive living room with its wide-open vistas of sky and green land as far as the eye could see. (Horan, 2007, p. 212, emphasis added)

However, what Mamah and Frank saw in that moment "was bare studs and lath board. Holes where doors and windows were to be placed. Vats for mixing plaster. Bags of sand. Sawhorses. And, everywhere, dust. Wood dust. Plaster dust. Dirt dust." (Horan, 2007, p. 213). In this performative ekphrasis, it is possible to see the character's interactions with the building process as the architect envisions how the house will be and the imagination carries out all the construction reality and replaces it by how that will turn their house into a home. In that way, when Frank had toured her walking her through the house, she could realize how guests would feel because of the difference between the low ceiling on the entryway to the expansive living room that would invite the guest to contemplate the wide-open vistas.

Mamah and Frank, then, went outside as they "walked down to the Wisconsin River below the house" (Horan, 2007, p. 213) where they could eat and watch "the men load wheelbarrows full of sand" (p. 213). This passage shows Mamah and Frank's interactions with the building process. In this way, even though in that moment there was only a construction, the couple was already seizing this process. "After a time, they walked back up the hill behind the workmen" (p. 213), and

> Out in the courtyard, men stirred sand, lime, and water into a brown 'mud' mix. A young plasterer carried a bucket inside and spread some onto a stretch of wall in the living room as an undercoat. While it was drying, Frank went to the car and retrieved some pigments he had bought in the city. He poured ocher and umber in varying amounts in different buckets of plaster, making an array of shades for using different walls, "depending on the lights they get," he told the plasterer, who had watched the mixing cautiously. (Horan, 2007, p. 213-214)

About this extract it is also relevant to observe that this building process relies a lot on Frank's decisions since the plasterer got impressed by his ability to decide the colors as he

asked “How will you get the same color again if you don’t measure and write it down?” (Horan, 2007, p. 214) to which he replied “I can look at the shade on the wall and remix it” (p. 214). In this way, the plasterer would depend on him when it was necessary to achieve this mixture again.

Moreover, it is essential to state that Mamah was also excited about the house. Because of that, she moved her boxes into a shed for storage “cleaning, cleaning, trying to get the dust and debris out of the bedroom they were to sleep in” (Horan, 2007, p. 214), so they could already spend their first night in the house. Even though there were no windows in the bedroom yet, during the “night when they lay down, Frank put out his arm to hold her [while pointing] out Orion’s Belt through the open hole in the wall” (p. 214). Once again it is possible to realize the couple’s relationship through the house and how it is important to them, as they preferred to sleep into a construction site that was turning out to be their home than spend the night over somewhere else.

The construction continued and “*Taliesin* had come a long way since Mamah had arrived that first August day” (Horan, 2007, p. 232, emphasis added). As it was possible to notice from that first house impression, the views were very important to the couple. Because of that, now, “[t]here were windows in—large clear panes, [but] no stained glass because there was no need to block out the views” (p. 232). It is also very significant for Mamah as she decided to include in the photo album telling *Taliesin*’s story the “long views from every direction, then close views of Frank’s studio, the bunk room, bedrooms, and [... t]o capture the expanse of the living room, she would take three photos and splice them together in a triptych, like a Japanese screen” (p. 234). In this extract, as the narrator is describing how the building process is, technical terms related to the construction are mentioned such as “[t]here was plaster on the walls. Rough-cut oak beams thrust out from interior walls of stacked limestone” (p. 232). This brief technical architectural ekphrasis is followed by Mamah’s reflections about the new house.

“*How different from the house on East Avenue*” (Horan, 2007, p. 232, italics in the original). Mamah explained this thought by comparing *Taliesin* to the houses Wright had built in the ‘prairie house’ style. She affirmed that “[i]n Oak Park, the kind of building Frank had put up [...] turned inward toward the hearth and family life and turned its back on the street, because there was no real prairie beyond the door, only other houses” (p. 232). *Taliesin*, however, “opened its arms to what was outside—the sun and sky and green hills and black

earth" (p. 232). Since "[f]ar more than the house on East avenue, this house promised good times" (p. 232), it is possible to infer that Mamah believed at this time that *Taliesin* would feel like home.

Even though, at first, Mamah had wished for staying in Italy, *Taliesin* was "truly for her, with its terraces and courtyard and gardens so like the Italian villas she had loved" (Horan, 2007, p. 232). Mamah considered *Taliesin* original as it was "unlike anything else she had ever been in—a truly organic house that was *of* the hill" (p. 232, italics in the original). The narrator continues translating Mamah's contemplative amazement as "[m]ost astounding to [her] was the space within; it was a dimension unto itself" (p. 232), followed by the reflection of "[w]hat could be more expressive of the American ideal than a home where a person could feel sheltered and free at the same time?" (p. 232). This feeling of being sheltered and free manifests Mamah's wishes for her house in which she felt at home and it represents her lifelong trajectory of seeking for independence, as being free to be her true self in love and life is very important to her.

In this way, "[s]he loved sitting near the fireplace and looking out through the spacious living room to the fields and sky beyond. It was as if there were no walls to limit her view or thoughts or spirit as they expanded out and out" (Horan, 2007, p. 232). At this moment, "Mamah could picture Frank when he came to this hill with the idea of *Taliesin* brewing in his mind" (p. 232, emphasis added) as he was

> Unrestrained by a suburban lot, he was free here to scoop up the sun and breezes and views. She could see him standing with his nose in the air, sniffing like a bird dog, taking in the place the way he often did when an idea began to form in his mind. Pretty soon the squares and rectangles, the circles and triangles, would be arranging and rearranging themselves in his mind. This could go on for weeks before pencil touched paper. When it did, he might sketch furiously for only an hour before brilliant design appeared. How often she had heard him say with a bit of bravado, "I shook it out of my sleeve," as if it were the easiest thing, when in reality the design had been stewing for weeks inside his head. Other times he would take out his compass and T square and play on paper for long hours, designing and revising an idea, just as he'd done as a boy with his Froebel blocks. (Horan, 2007, p. 232-233)

Thus, in this moment, Mamah could grasp part of the creative process inside the architect's mind. However, she "could understand his creative process only to a point" (Horan, 2007, p. 233). Architecture's material modality, then, according to Vieira (2021a) "concerns both the physical materiality and the mental relationship involved within its transmediation" (p. 64). In this case, as Mamah and Frank were building a house for

themselves, this communicative process happened in their day-to-day lives and discussions and it relates to Gaston Bachelard's (1994) utterance that "[a]n entire past comes to dwell in a new house" (p. 5). Besides that, *Taliesin*'s architectural process happened mostly at this time of effective design and construction, but it was also permeated throughout their relationship, since their interactions and dreams influenced how they wanted the house to be and how they understood each other during the process of conquering their home.

That is why the space within is so important. Frank even considers it "the reality of a building" (Horan, 2007, p. 232) and believed that "what you put into that space will affect how you live in it and what you become" (p. 232). Because of that, Mamah and Frank agreed that at *Taliesin* they "didn't want to clutter the place with stuff that did not ennoble them" (p. 232). It is so significant that Mamah also "photograph[ed] the simple oak tables and chairs and beds Frank had commissioned" (p. 234) to include in the story album. Moreover, as the third and final house, *Taliesin* represents the closure of the seeking for love, self-discovery, and independence trajectory. Because of that, it is relatable that they want the house they are finally building to only represent pride and honor to the couple.

This feeling of dignity was spread in all the participants of the construction of the house since "the men who had worked on *Taliesin* were immensely proud of it" (Horan, 2007, p. 233, emphasis added). The relationship between the workmen and Frank and Mamah involved a lot of respect. At some point, "skeptics among them had been won over as they beheld the strange beauty of *Taliesin*, the 'organic' house they had shaped with their own hands out of Wisconsin rock, sand, and timber" (p. 233), which reflects the original and uncommon design of the house. Moreover, the fact that every night "the workmen gathered around the main fireplace" (p. 233) in the living room enlightens how valuable participating and joining the construction was to the couple. Thus, Frank "would never ask [the workmen] to do something he himself would not do" (p. 233) As it is possible to realize, the building process itself is really relevant to the story of *Taliesin* and it has an important role to both Mamah and Frank.

This importance was also captured in the "photo album that would tell the story of *Taliesin*" (Horan, 2007, p. 234, emphasis added), since the "[work]men's portrait" (p. 234) that Mamah had taken one evening in the living room was also one of the pictures in this album. Mamah "regretted what the shutter couldn't capture: the accents of Ireland and Norway and backwoods Wisconsin[; t]he sweet, high longing of the flute[; t]he smell of

tobacco on the men, and sweat muffled under layers of wool" (p. 233) because every detail belonging to *Taliesin*'s story was important to her. And the significance of these moments was not related to a static building, it was related to the whole complexity of an architectural configuration, encompassing the process involved in its construction and the feelings and dreams related to it, since their lifelong trajectory composed the essence of the house.

"[O]f course, "Flowers in the Crannied Wall," looming like a guardian angel at the gate" (Horan, 2007, p. 234) was in the "photo album that would tell the story of *Taliesin*" (p. 234, emphasis added). The statue refers back to the first day in which Mamah met the house. This photo album contains all the details Mamah considered important to save as the story of *Taliesin*. It also confirms that the building process is very relevant for Mamah and Frank as she wanted to capture all these moments in an album and give it to him. In this way, the most significant aspects Mamah saved in the album were the interaction with the workmen, many different views from the house, the space and furniture in the living room, and 'Flower in the Crannied Wall' that was the first part of the *Taliesin* Mamah had contact with when she got closer to the house.

After taking care of the construction of the house and the space within it, Mamah and Frank started dreaming about landscaping, developing *Taliesin* not only as a house, but also as a home. They were so interested in arranging all the details related to *Taliesin* that "[w]henever she and Frank got a moment together throughout February and March, they talked about planting" (Horan, 2007, p. 265). In the beginning, "[w]hen the few packets she'd ordered appeared in mid-March with the mail, [Mamah] planted the seeds in coffee tins and arranged them along the south-facing windows in her study" (p. 265). However, some time later, "the plant dreaming was on a colossal scale" (p. 265) as there were "thirty-one acres to think of, including an orchard and a vineyard" (p. 265), besides "the terrace garden that rose to the hilltop" (p. 265) and "planting beds scattered all around the house" (p. 265). Thus, the landscape design – "garden[ing]" (p. 158), and "grow[ing their] own food" (p. 158) – was very relevant to Mamah and Frank, even when they were only dreaming about how the house project would be: whether in Italy or Wisconsin.

About landscaping, "Frank had consulted with his friend Jans Jensen about the orchard and vineyard. He trusted the list of apple trees and grape varieties Jensen suggested, and added his own favorites" (Horan, 2007, p. 265). Mamah, however, "had her own authorities" (p. 265) being "Gertrude Jekyll, the English plantswoman, chief among them" (p. 265). She

"knew Jensen's prairie-style landscaping, even admired it. But grasses didn't make her heart thump the way roses did" (p. 265-266). Mamah had to convince Frank, though, to let her make decisions different from the "[p]lants in the native vernacular" (p. 266) he wanted as he had said from the beginning that "*Taliesin* should be all of a piece" (p. 266, emphasis added), that "the woods, the fields, the orchard and garden and house should be one seamless, continuous cloth" (p. 266). Thus, it's possible to infer, as Frank believed "the detail expresse[d] the whole" (p. 266), he wanted *Taliesin*'s particularities to be perfect according to the organic design he had in mind.

However, even though Frank was reluctant to accept Mamah's worldwide influences into the landscaping of their new house, he admitted that he had "built this place for [her]" (Horan, 2007, p. 266). Because of that, Mamah asked him to "think of [his] client" (p. 266) and told him she was "a woman who ha[d] seen England in summer" (p. 266). Since she wanted to "have flowers *and* prairie grasses" (p. 266, italics in the original), Mamah argued if "everything ha[d] to be exactly right" (p. 266) and questioned "Can't we play? Can't I make a few mistakes while I'm figuring things out?" (p. 266). After smiling, Frank uttered "[n]othing pink. And limit the foreigners, will you?" (p. 266) to which she replied "[r]eds and yellows would be gorgeous" (p. 266). In this way, it is important that Mamah left her signature on the house, turning it into a place she also participated in the design.

As a result, "Mamah thought about the planting beds from every angle" (Horan, 2007, p. 266) while she "watched the changing light on the hill" (p. 266). "Poring over Frank's plans for the whole of *Taliesin*" (p. 266-267, emphasis added), Mamah undertook the landscaping design and "made her own diagrams of flower beds in seasons, trying to create progressive waves of color" (p. 267). Because of actively participating in the decisions related to landscaping, ordering flowers and engaging with Frank into orchard requisitions for a variety of trees, Mamah had "been thrilled to be *home* in time to see the first asparagus-like plugs of peonies rise out of the ground, and to smell the lilacs when they first popped open" (p. 274, emphasis added) when "she and Frank had returned" (p. 274) from Japan "to *Taliesin* in April" (p. 274, emphasis added). At this moment, the house "looked more beautiful than ever" (p. 274) and "Mamah and Frank's common history—the prairie house, Italy, Japan, even a bit of Germany—seemed to permeate every square inch of *Taliesin*" (p. 274, emphasis added). This connection between the close future being constructed through the present building process and arrangement of details in *Taliesin* to Mamah and Frank's common

history was cementing the structure of their new home.

The house, however, did not bring Mamah only happy memories since "[s]ome of the harder parts about this place had not changed" (Horan, 2007, p. 274). One of these was that she "couldn't look out at the driveway without remembering the reporters coming up to the house" (p. 274) when they discovered that Mamah and Frank had been living together at *Taliesin*. Nevertheless, "[m]akeshift as it was, *Taliesin* was a real community" (p. 332, emphasis added) and "[t]here were strong ties among the men". Mamah considered the workmen family and she "would never forget how they had stepped forward to protect her and Frank when the posse of vigilantes was supposedly on its way" (p. 332). This friendly atmosphere also contributed to Mamah seeing *Taliesin* as her home, since in contrast to past experiences, in this house they had not run away from the press leaving everything behind, they had stayed and protected their lives and their house until the reporters went away.

In this way, Mamah had a belonging sentiment as "[i]t had taken time, but the man had enfolded her into their society" (Horan, 2007, p. 332). Reinforcing Mamah's independence, she was accepted "as the boss when Frank was away" (p. 332). She had not only grown "more confident by the day about running the farm" (p. 332), but also had answered "design question[s]" (p. 332) and taken "construction decision[s]", however, only in Frank's absence. These were some of the steps that contributed to Mamah's search for independence and self-confidence.

Although Mamah and Frank were happy about their relationship, they had some serious arguments concerning his challenge in not contracting debts in order to ask the best for *Taliesin*. One day furniture "from Marshall Field's" (Horan, 2007, p. 283) arrived when only Mamah had been home. There was a "large Chinese carpet" (p. 283), "*one, two, three,* she counted … six—new chairs" (p. 283, italics in the original), "[a]nother six chairs were scattered around the room" (p. 283) and "a gleaming grand piano" (p. 283), besides "a stack of nine or ten rolled up rugs and varying sizes" (p. 283). What Mamah "could not imagine was how [Frank] had paid for" (p.284) these furniture, since he had only mentioned "the possibility—*possibility*— of a huge job he was scheduled to discuss with a contact" (p. 283, italics in the original). It all had made her worried about their finances.

Furthermore, in this same day, Mamah receive the visit of Josiah, the carpenter who had worked for them, and discovered Frank "owe[ed him] money" (Horan, 2007, p. 285) "for the bookcases" (p. 285) from over "a year ago" (p. 285). In that night, Mamah "woke in a

panic", since she "had no idea how much or how little money they had" and realized that, even though "Frank had said their finances were in good shape since the trip to Japan" (p. 285), "she did not trust him" (p. 285) about this matter. On the next day, Mamah confronted one of the workmen asking if Frank had been paying the bills, for which she received the answer "He always pays me on time" (p. 288). All this reveals how Frank dealt with his finances in a self-centered way – since he felt that "beautiful things" (p. 294) were "necessary *tools* for [his] life" (p. 290, italics in the original). Before this moment, about this trait of personality related to buying "things [he couldn't] afford" (p. 290), Mamah had not been fully aware.

Because of that, Mamah was outraged and thought "*If Frank were in [the same] room [as she]*" (Horan, 2007, p. 287, italics in the original), "*[she] would strangle him with [her] own hands*" (p. 287, italics in the original). She felt betrayed and confronted Frank when he arrived: "You will fix this. *Fix* this!" (p. 289, italics in the original). Mamah demanded that Frank "return[ed] all [the furniture from Marshall Field's]" (p. 289), paid "the people [he] owe[d] money to" (p. 289), asked "their forgiveness for [his] arrogance in not doing it sooner" (p. 289), besides concluding that "Catherine knew what [she] didn't know. That [he doesn't] pay people" (p. 298). She accused: "That's why she won't divorce you, isn't it? She's afraid, isn't she, that once you're free, she won't get a red scent out of you?" (p. 289). In this way, it is essential to state how inconsequential and dishonest Frank was not only to Mamah, but also to a lot of other people.

Moreover, as the focus of this analysis is on how Mamah's interactions with some houses impacted her life trajectory, this episode is relevant to her seeking for independence since, because of that discovery, she headed to Chicago on the next morning of this discussion. There, she went after her sister "to apologize [...] for all the trouble [she'd] put [her] through" (Horan, 2007, p. 294). Her sister, Lizzie, however was aggrieved since "[her] ambitions never seemed to figure into things" (p. 295) and angry because she believed Mamah "[...] had everything. [She] had a wonderful man who adored [her], beautiful healthy children. Freedom. No money worries. A nanny and a housekeeper. [She] didn't have to work, and Edwin never asked a thing of [her]" (p. 295) but gave up all that because "[she] had [her] personality to discover" (p. 295). After that conversation, Mamah found herself with a "shapeless anger" (p. 297) and with the feeling that her journey searching for love and self-discovery had left her "[a]ttached to two colossal personalities" (p. 297) as she "[s]pent

herself on Frank Lloyd Wright and Ellen Key, who would have done great work without ever having know her" (p. 297) and "[p]oured her soul into defending the sanctity of the individual while John and Martha [her children] slid from her grasp" (p. 297). This reflection is extremely relevant to her search for independence. At this point, Mamah meditates on how she had been under both Frank's and Ellen Key's shadows.

When Mamah went back to where she had been staying in Chicago, Frank was there pleading he would not "stay long" (Horan, 2007, p. 298) because he knew she had come there "to be alone" (p. 298). Frank, however, wanted to "say something to [her]" (p. 298). At this point, he assumed "[he'd] never been a good friend to anybody" (p. 298) and confessed that "[his] conscience haunt[ed him]" (p. 298). He said he was "sorry for all of it" (p 298) and he was "sorry [he] failed [her] as a friend. [She] of all people" (p. 298). Then, he concluded "[he would] try to put the shambles of this soul of [him] into some kind of decent order. If [she] never wanted to see [him] again, [he] would understand. [He could] not tell [her] how much [he] regret[ed] that [he'd] pushed [her] to this point" (p. 298). Again, this conspicuous matter on their relationship has significant implications on Mamah's path pursuing independence because she had made Frank come to her, which was contrary to her lifetime pattern of managing her desires into a way that it was possible for her to follow him.

Her stance, therefore, remarked how her independence was more important to Mamah than being close to Frank. In this way, after presenting one more time how arrogant he had been in some of his actions, specifically, about "[h]ow dare" (Horan, 2007, p. 299) he could "diminish Marion Mahony!" (p. 299) – one of the architects that had worked with them during the construction of the first house: *The Good Times House* – after she had "made [him] comprehensible to people who didn't understand [his] work" (p. 299), asking "[w]hy [couldn't him] give other people credit" (p. 299) and about the fact that "[he] d[id]n't pay people … *little* people! The very first ones who should be paid" (p. 299, italics in the original); Mamah told Frank he had "to choose what kind of person [he was] going to be" (p. 299) as he could "go on living from one financial crisis to the next[, …] cheating people and making [him]self ridiculous with [his] talk about hewing to a higher standard than the common man" (p. 299) or he could "actually make good on that talk" (p. 299). Then, she affirmed she could not go back to *Taliesin* yet because "[he] need[ed] to think about all the things that must be fixed" (p. 300) since it was "no small change [he was] committing [him]self to if [he] want[ed] to remain with [her]" (p. 300). With that attitude, Mamah made

an important standpoint on her independence pursuit by making clear that, even though she had left her children moving to another country to follow him, and moved back to the United States against her wish to stay in Italy, she would not accept something just because Frank wanted so.

Six days later Frank appeared one more time at Mamah's door stating: "A long time ago, you and I promised to keep each other honest. If you come back to *Taliesin* with me, I can change. I'm going to get rid of the rottenness inside me, Mame. But I can't do it without you. I need you there every day, to tell me the truth." (Horan, 2007, p. 301). After reflecting about his financial problems, Mamah replied "the children [were] what matters [then]" (p. 302), "[she could]n't be spending all [her] time worrying if [he had] paid [his] bills" (p. 302). During this conversation, even though she knew she "[m]aybe she was [being] the world's biggest fool" (p. 302), "she'd go back with him and try to start over. But from here on out, it was a life of vigilance that she was in for" (p. 302). At this point, it is possible to realize that Mamah was conscious about Frank's mistakes and that she had to be aware in order not to let her independence be held to ransom by his arrogant defects.

After going back to *Taliesin*, Mamah and Frank seemed to have managed this aspect of their relationship as there were no other significant incidents about this matter. Although their relationship did not had a big transformation at this point, Mamah managed to impose her position which is significant to her search for independence. Besides that, after Mamah had established her boundaries in her relationship, she also thought about pursuing a path towards independence when she considered writing a book of her own. "*Freedom of the Personality*. She [had] said it out loud. Too stuffy for a title, she thought, when it came to her ears. But that would be the gist of it" (Horan, 2007, p. 314, italics in the original). This moment where she chose to write about "stories of contemporary women, all kinds of women who had struggled against the odds to make authentic lives for themselves" (p. 314) was important because she also decided to write unrestrained from Ellen Key, switching from a translator to the writer she had "*imagined [she] would eventually*" (p. 5, italics in the original) become. Hence, she criticized Ellen Key's books for being "too philosophical, with few real-life examples" (p. 315), distancing herself from Key and positioning herself as a feminist writer portraying her view of, not only other women's journeys, but also her own trajectory.

Therefore, Mamah's search for independence is not minor since she begins to write a book with a collection of "*stories of women who [were] struggling for living true, to make*

honest and meaningful lives for themselves" (Horan, 2007, p. 324, italics in the original) aiming that she could "*cast a little light on someone else's path*" (p. 324-325, italics in the original) or inspire "*another woman [to] take courage for her own struggles*" (p. 325, italics in the original). Mamah had the idea for this book since she realized "*many women throughout [her] life ha[d] eased [her] journey*" (p. 324, italics in the original) and that "*[w]omen are storytellers*" (p. 324, italics in the original) which is "*how we bring one another comfort and illumination*" (p. 324, italics in the original). Besides that, Mamah's "*book [was] an attempt to name [women's] struggles*" (p. 324, italics in the original). For that "[s]he wouldn't lie" (p. 315) as she would "tell about more than the triumphs" (p. 315), she would "write about the pitfalls[, …] about walls up ahead that were waiting to be hit" (p. 315). She would comment on "[t]he mistakes[, t]he guilt and regret" (p. 315) to encompass "[n]ot just the chances seized but the chances missed" (p. 315). This is the essence of how Mamah found a way of translating many different life stories that could connect and support women through their own struggles searching for love, self-discovery, and independence.

Her search for independence, however, was abruptly interrupted when one of the workmen set fire on *Taliesin* after Mamah had reproved his behavior and dismissed him. This arson fire led to the murdering of some of the employees, Mamah, and her children – who had been visiting over. The performative ekphrasis of the moment when Frank, who had been in Chicago on that day, approached the house reported:

> On the drive to *Taliesin* in the darkness, the hills appear as they always do in August, great dark curves beneath a banner of twinkling stars. As the auto approaches the house, the stars disappear in a shroud of smoke. On the grounds, hundreds of lanterns flicker. When the car comes around a bend, Frank can see, even in the darkness, that half the house is missing. Smoke clouds waft up from the black scar in the hillside. (Horan, 2007, p. 342-343, emphasis added).

Just as "half the house [was] missing" (Horan, 2007, p. 343), Mamah's life was left incomplete leaving not only a "black scar in the hillside" (p. 243), but also on Frank and Edwin Cheney's lives. In the end, "[o]nly [Frank's] studio remain[ed], and the barn" (p. 349). Frank "collects a scythe and walks to Mamah's garden" (p. 349) which "stands, incredibly nearly untouched by the destruction" (p. 349), symbolizing again how her life was suddenly terminated, leaving "[t]he memory of the deaf smell" (p. 355) coming at any moment to him, "feeling his nose, sickening his stomach" (p. 355). In this tone, we conclude this analysis, since Mamah's trajectory ended still when "[s]ome of her roses ha[d] just opened" (p. 355),

comparatively to what had happened in her unfinished garden, her search for independence had only begun as her book had just been set in motion.

4 FINAL THOUGHTS

Loving Frank written by Nancy Horan (2007) is a historical fiction novel that enabled the analysis of various aspects related to architectural ekphrasis and to the social context presented in the narrative. This final paper aimed to research the implications of Frank Lloyd Wright's architectural works on Mamah Borthwick's characterization, narrated through the novel *Loving Frank*.

Overall, the spaces encountered in the novel – *The Good Times House*, *The Strand*, and also *Taliesin* – are carved with memories. *The Good Times House* was the one responsible for Mamah meeting Frank and start pursuing freedom of love. Then, after suffering several emotional conflicts and facing public disapproval, she ventured on a pursuit of self-discovery that culminated in her encounter with the feminist Ellen Key that took her to *The Strand* where she could find a refuge from life's sea. This architectural site prompted Mamah to think concretely about how she wanted her house to be and the atmosphere she wished to create in her home. However, Frank, as the architect, was the one responsible for building this house. In the end, the house that also became their home was *Taliesin*.

Additionally, this analysis investigated Mamah's life journey through architectural ekphrastic passages, delving into the social context in which she lived, where she fought for individualism within the Woman Movement and for freedom in love, both inside and outside marriage. As a result, Gaston Bachelard's notion has underpinned this work together with intermedial studies in order to connect Mamah's trajectory seeking for love, self-discovery, and searching for independence – an aspiration tragically unfulfilled due to her murder – through the interaction with architecture.

Considering Mamah's connection to the three houses presented in the novel as a central thread, this work delved into an analysis of architectural ekphrases in order to observe how the main character's trajectory was constantly constructed and reconstructed throughout the novel. Therefore, her engagement with these architectural sites shaped her journey pursuing freedom of personality, leading her from loving Frank to seeking independence along with a process of self-discovery.

REFERENCES

BACHELARD, Gaston. **The poetics of space**. Translated by: Maria Jolas. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994.

CAMBRIDGE DICTIONARY. **Brow**. Available at: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/brow>. Accessed on: April, 04, 2024.

CAMBRIDGE DICTIONARY. **Nestled**. Available at: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/nestled>. Accessed on: August, 08, 2024.

CAMBRIDGE DICTIONARY. **Strand**. Available at: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/pt/dicionario/ingles/strand>. Accessed on: September, 15, 2023.

CLÜVER, Claus. 'On gazers' encounters with visual art: ekphrasis, readers, 'iconotexts'. In: MEEK, Richard; KENNEDY, David. **Ekphrastic Encounters**: New Interdisciplinary Essays on Literature and the Visual Arts. Manchester: Manchester U P, 2019. p. 237-256.

GUTENBERG.org. **Books by Borthwick, Mamah Bouton**. Available at: <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/author/36911>. Accessed on: May 31, 2023.

HORAN, Nancy. **Loving Frank**. 2007.

BRUHN, Jørgen. **Intermediality and Narrative Literature**: Medialities Matter. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

KRECKEL, Ken. **Loving Frank**. Available in: <https://historicalnovelsociety.org/reviews/loving-frank/>. Accessed on: Feb 03, 2025.

LENGBORN, Thorbjörn. ELLEN KEY. In: **Prospects**: the quarterly review of comparative education. Paris, UNESCO: International Bureau of Education, vol. XXIII, no. 3/4, 1993, p. 825-837. 2000.

MOMA. **Frank Lloyd Wright**. Available at: <https://www.moma.org/artists/6459>. Accessed on: May 31, 2023.

RESENDE, Ana Laura Johann Chaves. Implicações da relação do arquiteto e sua obra no romance *Loving Frank*, de Nancy Horan. In: Congresso de Produção Científica e Acadêmica da UFSJ, XXI, 2024. **Anais do XXI CPC**. São João del-Rei: UFSJ, 2024. Available at: <https://ufsj.edu.br/cpc/cpc_anais.php>. Accessed on: December 10, 2024.

RESENDE, Ana Laura Johann Chaves. Seeking space for love, self-discovery, and independence in Loving Frank, by Nancy Horan. **Scripta Alumni**, v. 2, n. 2, p. 84-99, 2023. Available at: <https://revista.uniandrade.br/index.php/ScriptaAlumni/article/view/3011>. Accessed on: November 15, 2024.

VIEIRA, Miriam de Paiva. Écfrase: de recurso retórico na Antiguidade a fenômeno midiático na contemporaneidade. **Revista todas as letras** (MACKENZIE. Online), v. 19, p. 45-57, 2017.

VIEIRA, Miriam de Paiva. Building Bridges: The Modes of Architecture. In: ELLESTRÖM, Lars (ed.) **Beyond Media Borders**, vol 2. 1 ed. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2021a, v.2, p. 59-77.

VIEIRA, Miriam de Paiva. Out of Space: The Complexity of Contemplative and Performative Architectural Ekphrasis In: **Text-Image-Music**: Crossing the Borders Intermedial Conversations on the Poetics of Verbal, Visual and Musical Texts In Honour of Prof. Elzbieta Chrzanowska-Kluczewska, v. 1. 1 ed. Berlin: Peter Lang, 2021b, p. 135-149.