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THE ECHOING HOUSE: Perception of Space and (de)construction of Home in Simon
Mawer's *The Glass Room*.

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À minha família, meu lar e mais íntimo lugar de afeto e pertencimento.
Em especial, à minha mãe e abrigo, que reside eternamente em minhas memórias.

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“A house is not a home unless it contains
food and fire for the mind as well as the body.”

Benjamin Franklin

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the representation of the architectural space in the novel *The Glass Room* (2009), by Simon Mawer, focusing on how the character Liesel Landauer perceives, experiences, and gives meaning to the house throughout the narrative. By analyzing the ekphrastic passages of the house, this study discusses how these literary representations help us understand Liesel's relationship with the environment and the emotional meanings she attaches to it. The modernist house's function changes throughout the novel and becomes a space where different emotions emerge, including discomfort, belonging, and non-belonging. In this context, home is not immediately formed by the physical structure of a house, but by sensory experiences, emotional attachment, and the subjective relationship between character and space.

Keywords: Intermediality; Architectural Ekphrasis; Home; Modalities of Media; Memory.

RESUMO

Este trabalho investiga a representação do espaço arquitetônico no romance *The Glass Room* (2009), de Simon Mawer, com foco em como a personagem Liesel Landauer percebe, experiencia e atribui significado à casa ao longo da narrativa. A partir da análise das passagens ecfrásticas relacionadas à casa, o estudo discute como essas representações literárias contribuem para a compreensão da relação de Liesel com o espaço e dos significados emocionais que ela lhe atribui. A função da casa modernista transforma-se ao longo do romance, tornando-se um espaço no qual emergem diferentes emoções, incluindo desconforto, pertencimento e não pertencimento. Nesse contexto, o lar não é constituído imediatamente pela estrutura física da casa, mas pelas experiências sensoriais, vínculo afetivo e pela relação subjetiva estabelecida entre a personagem e o espaço.

Keywords: Intermidialidade; Écfrase Arquitetônica; Lar; Modalidades de Mídia; Memória.

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INTRODUCTION

Some houses remain standing after we leave them. Others survive only in memory, but they do not stay the same. They may return unexpectedly through dreams, familiar smells, objects or sounds. Although physically absent, these places continue to inhabit us. In literature, houses often transcend their function as mere structures. They become repositories of memory, witnesses to human experience daily life, and extensions of the characters who inhabit them. Through the narrative, they can be reconstructed, revisited and experienced again. In this sense, space, beyond being descriptive, participates actively in the construction of the narrative and influences the way the characters experience it.

This research is situated within intermedial studies, especially in the relation between literature and architecture. In Simon Mawer's *The Glass Room* (2009), the modernist house represented in the novel becomes one of the central elements of the narrative. The reader cannot physically enter this fictional architecture building, but through architectural ekphrasis, the novel enables the reader to imagine, visualize, and move through the space.

This present study seeks to answer the following questions: How does the character Liesel perceive and attribute meaning to the house? How do memory and sensory perception contribute to the construction of home? And how can these processes be examined through the concepts of intermediality, media modalities, and architectural ekphrasis?

The relevance of this analysis lies in the fact that architectural ekphrasis has often been less explored than other forms of ekphrasis, especially when connected to emotional experience, memory, and female subjectivity. By analyzing *The Glass Room*, this study contributes to understanding how literary spaces may function as emotional and psychological extensions of characters, particularly in a context marked by war, displacement, and exile.

The general objective is to analyze the representation of architectural space and its emotional and symbolic function in Liesel's experience in the novel. More specifically, this study aims to explore architectural ekphrasis and the setting as mediators of Liesel's emotion; investigate how the space is activated by memory; examine the construction of belonging and non-belonging of home; and understand how the house acquires meaning throughout the narrative.

To address these questions and aims, this study draws on theories of intermediality proposed by Claus Clüver (2006; 2019), Irina Rajewsky (2005), Jørgen Bruhn and Beate Schirrmacher (2021), and Lars Elleström (2010, 2021), as well as discussions of architectural ekphrasis developed by Ruth Webb (2009) and Miriam Vieira (2017). The concept of home and its relation to memory are examined through Gaston Bachelard's reflections in *The Poetics of Space* (1964), while Juhani Pallasmaa and Zhihui Zhang (2024) contribute to the discussion of sensory perception and emotional responses to architecture.

Methodologically, this research follows a qualitative, bibliographical, and interpretative approach. It is based on the literary analysis of Simon Mawer's *The Glass Room* (2009), focusing on the representation of architectural space and on the emotional and symbolic role of the house in Liesel's experience, one of the main characters of the novel and the one most deeply connected to the space. Instead of analyzing the novel as a whole, the study follows Liesel's relationship with the house and observes how she perceives it, remembers it, and gives meaning to it at different moments of the narrative.

The analysis is supported by theoretical studies on intermediality, architectural ekphrasis, memory, home, and media modalities. These concepts are used to examine how the house is represented through language and how its material, sensory, spatial, and symbolic aspects affect Liesel's experience.

The corpus is examined through selected passages in which the house appears as more than a setting or an architectural object. The analysis will be organized around five moments in Liesel's relationship with the house: the idea of the house before its construction, the construction process, her experience of living there before exile, the period of distance from the house during exile, and her return to it. This organization makes it possible to observe how the meaning of the house is built and transformed, moving from expectation and daily life to distance, memory, and return.

Although Liesel is the main focus of this study, other characters, such as her husband, Viktor, and people around her, will be mentioned when their presence helps clarify her emotions, actions, and relation to the house. The selected passages will be analyzed through close reading, theoretical comparison, and critical interpretation. Through this method, the research seeks to understand how architectural space activates memory, shapes emotions, and

contributes to the construction of home as an affective and symbolic space shaped by experience.

This final course paper is divided into three chapters. After this introduction, the first chapter presents the theoretical framework, discussing intermediality, media modalities, architectural ekphrasis, home, and memory. The second chapter introduces the novel, its plot, setting, and relation to modernist architecture. The third chapter develops the analysis of the construction and deconstruction of home through Liesel's relationship with the house. The analysis follows five stages in Liesel's relationship with the house: its conception, construction, inhabitation, loss during exile, and return. Although these stages are not explicitly presented in the novel, they provide a framework for observing how the meaning of home evolves throughout the narrative. Finally, we present the final considerations, where we seek to understand how the modernist architectural building becomes a meaningful space that continues to echo in the characters' minds over time.

1 BUILDING FOUNDATIONS

Before understanding how the house does, or does not, become home in the novel, it is necessary to understand the devices used for this observation. This chapter presents the theoretical framework that supports the analysis developed in this study. It discusses the concept of intermediality and the relationship between literature and architecture; Elleström's (2010, 2021) modalities of media; ekphrasis and its role in creating vivid representations of space. Finally, it addresses the concepts of home and memory.

1.1 Media and Intermediality

As mentioned earlier, this final course paper is an intermedial study between literature and architecture, analyzing the representation of the historical house known as Villa Tugendhat in the novel *The Glass Room*. To go further, it is first necessary to understand what we consider as media and intermediality.

Intermediality refers to the relations between different media. Media constantly interacts, overlaps, and influences other medias. In “Inter textus / inter artes / inter media”, Clüver (2006) organizes these relations in the categories: transposition, multimedia, mixed media, and intermedia. It is relevant to point out that these categories were developed in German in the early twentieth century, as one of the first attempts to present a model for understanding media. Transposition happens when one medium is transferred into another. Multimedia involves different media placed side by side, while mixed-media works combine different media in the same text or object, although their components can still be recognized. Intermedia, in contrast, involves a much closer fusion. The media are joined in such a way that they cannot be fully separated without changing the work itself (Clüver, 2006). In a similar train of thought, Rajewsky (2005) classifies intermediality in three categories: media transposition, media combination, and intermedial references. The first refers to the transformation of one medium into another; the second includes works in which more than one medium is present, and the third refers to the “evocation or imitation” of another medium (Rajewsky, 2005, p. 52). Although the terminology is different, both classifications show that intermediality involves crossings, combinations, and references between media.

Although those classifications help organize the different types of relations between media, in the end, they can all be summarized as intermedia since “there is no such thing as a ‘pure’ medium” (Mitchell, 1995, p. 94-95, *apud* Rippl, 2015, p. 4).

The concept of media can be seen as an umbrella term, since media can be found everywhere we look. Many things can function as media, which makes the term difficult to define. What is certain, is that media is related to communication. Therefore, as Bruhn and Schirmacher (2021) point out, some people may associate media with technical devices such as television, radio, computers, and smartphones. For a long time, according to Marshall McLuhan’s (1987) definition, media was considered simply as “any extension of man”, however, this definition still does not fully capture the concept. Instead of trying to define what is (or is not) a medium, Bruhn and Schirmacher (2021) suggest that it is more productive to examine how objects and phenomena function as media products, focusing on how material objects facilitate human communication and how the material aspects of a medium shape what is communicated. In conclusion, according to the same authors, “media are the invisible but crucial basis of human communication, and the material aspects of media shape what is communicated and what can be communicated” (Bruhn & Schirmacher, 2021, p. 10). With that definition in mind, it is possible to affirm that both literature and architecture are media, since they serve as material vehicles for human communication mediation.

Bruhn and Schirmacher (2021) state that in daily life, we perceive media content but tend to overlook its interaction with material, sensorial, and semiotic processes. Moreover, media is more than its materiality; we can engage with it through all five senses: seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, and even tasting. In the case of an architectural media product, such as a house, people may not consciously notice what the walls are made of, the scent of wood, the texture of concrete, the creak of old furniture, or the symbolic meaning of colors. Typically, the focus is simply on entering the space, spending an amount of time there, and then moving on to another experience. However, even without conscious awareness, these interactions profoundly shape how we perceive and feel the space.

The media characteristics described above are what Elleström (2010, 2021) calls the four modalities of media: material, sensorial, spatiotemporal, and semiotic. It is not necessary to know them to be affected by them. However, as Bruhn and Schirmacher (2021) state, comprehending these modalities facilitates our understanding and communication with media

products. Still based on Bruhn and Schirmacher (2021), we can briefly examine each one. (1) The material modality is related to the function of an object as mediator, acting as a ‘bridge’ between the message and the receiver. If we think of a cathedral, for example, stone would be the material medium. The huge size, high ceiling and stained-glass window function as a mediator between the message: sensations of awe, spirituality, inferiority to the receiver. (2) The sensorial modality is related to how the material interface is experienced in senses of seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling or tasting. This topic will be further explored below. (3) In the spatiotemporal modality, we perceive different objects across time and space. And, the last one, (4) the semiotic modality. All the previous three qualities “provide information that we understand to represent something else” (Bruhn & Schirmacher, 2021, p. 22), which enables meaning-making. In other words, the semiotic modality refers to the way signs are interpreted and connected to meanings. It is through this modality that sounds, images, words, gestures, colors, and spatial arrangements stop being merely physical or sensory elements and begin to function as signs.

1.1.1 Sensorial modality in architecture

In accordance with the architect Juhani Pallasmaa (2011 p.595, *apud* Charles Spence 2020, p.2), “Spaces, places, and buildings are undoubtedly encountered as multisensory lived experiences. Instead of registering architecture merely as visual images, we scan our settings by the ears, skin, nose, and tongue”. Architecture can be fully experienced through all the senses. Furthermore, Pallasmaa emphasizes that “every building or space has its characteristic sound of intimacy or monumentality, rejection or invitation, hospitality or hostility” (Pallasmaa, 1994 p.31). Besides the actual sound of the material product, the one we hear with our ears, Pallasmaa suggests that there is a sound perceived by the eye. Using the cathedral as an example again: Inside the enormous building, we hear the echo emitted by the walls and the creaking of footsteps, but we also visualize the sound of emptiness or fullness, solemnity or celebration conveyed through the architectural forms, proportions.

The architect Witold Rybczynski (2001) states that “the experience of architecture is palpable” (Rybczynski, 2001, p. 89, *apud* Charles Spence, 2020, p.9). To fully experience a building it is necessary to be inside of it. It is almost impossible to feel an architectural product

without engaging with it. The first step of interaction is opening the door, and even when this step is skipped, we interact with the space in some way. In literature, we cannot physically touch the buildings described, but through memory and imagination, we can sense how certain materials and textures feel. Regarding memory, Pallasmaa (1994, p.32) notes that:

The strongest memory of a space is often its odor; I cannot remember the appearance of the door to my grandfather's farm-house from my early childhood, but I do remember the resistance of its weight, the patina of its wood surface scarred by half century of use, and I recall especially the scent of home that hit my face as an invisible wall behind the door.

The smell of a place is not a noticeable aspect unless it stinks, but it is present in all places. For example, wood scent can evoke a sense of age, such as in a grandfather's house, or suggest freshness, such as in a new wardrobe. A hospital and an office may smell like air conditioning, while a home often carries a 'warmer' smell, such as prepared meals. But what about the taste? At first sight, architecture and taste may seem unrelated, in spite of that, Pallasmaa (2011, p.595, *apud* Charles Spence, 2020, p.12) states: "The suggestions that the sense of taste would have a role in the appreciation of architecture may sound preposterous. However, polished and coloured stone as well as colours in general, and finely crafted wood details, for instance, often evoke an awareness of mouth and taste." Seeing with these lenses, linking architecture and taste is not absurd. A familiar example is the relation between food and the color red. Some studies suggest that red and orange stimulate appetite, being the prevalent colors in food brand identities such as McDonalds, Wendy's, Burger King, KFC and others.

We sense a particular aspect through one or more sense organs, and then we perceive and process the sensation or sensations in both our brain and body. Experiencing perception through our brain is called cognitive perception, and meaning-making through our body is called embodiment. These processes are deeply interrelated. The embodied reactions to our surroundings that are processed unconsciously or preconsciously are called affects and once we become cognitively aware of these reactions and name them to categorize them, we call them emotion." (Bruhn & Schirmacher, 2021, p. 21)

1.1.1.1 Emotion

Architecture goes beyond just providing physical shelter, it actively shapes human emotion and perception. As Winston Churchill once stated, “we shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us. Architectural spaces have the power to evoke feelings ranging from awe to anxiety, from serenity to stimulation” (Zhang, 2024, p. 18). This idea highlights that a building is deeply connected to human experience.

In this sense, “architecture transcends mere functional design. It creates a bridge, an emotional connection, between the built environment and its occupants” (Zhang, 2024, p. 15). This perspective is reinforced by the idea that architecture “profoundly connects with human experiences, emotions, and behaviors” (Zhang, 2024, p. 19). The construction of places, and especially “the interplay of forms, light, and materials,” can “induce an extensive range of emotions, both positive and negative” (Zhang, 2024, p. 19). These elements are not just aesthetic choices, but also shape how we perceive the space and interact with it.

Sensory modalities play a central role in this process. What we see, hear, smell and feel helps us create meaning with a space. Light, color, texture, and even sound can make a place feel welcoming or uncomfortable. For example, a room with soft light and warm colors can feel calm and comfortable, while a room with strong light and cold colors can feel unpleasant. At the same time, spaces also carry meanings and emotions. This emotional connection is also linked to memory, since “emotionally resonant spaces tend to be more memorable,” and “the emotional impact of a place can etch it into one’s memory, making the experience lasting and meaningful” (Zhang, 2024, p. 18). In other words, we tend to remember places not just for what they look like, but also for how they make us feel.

In conclusion, as Zhang (2024) states, “architects can craft spaces that not only cater to our functional needs but also touch our souls” (Zhang, 2024, p. 18). The emotional and sensory dimensions are essential, reinforcing the idea that designing a space is not only about function, but also about creating meaningful and emotional connections between people and the environment.

1.2 Ekphrasis

Once the origin of ekphrasis may help us to understand its meaning, here is a brief overview of the concept before we delve into it. According to Vieira (2017), the word comes

from the Greek verb *phrazein*, which means “to tell,” “to declare,” or “to show,” and from the prefix *ek-*, which means “outside,” “completely,” or “entirely.” Therefore, *ek-phrazein* can be understood as the act of showing something completely through words. In Ancient Greece, ekphrasis was first connected to oral tradition and rhetoric, but later it became an important literary resource.

For a long time, ekphrasis was mainly associated with the description of paintings and other works of visual art. However, contemporary studies have expanded this concept. Vieira (2017) explains that ekphrasis can also be applied to other arts, “such as sculpture, installation and architecture” as well as to literary genres like novels, short stories, and cinema (Vieira, 2017, p. 46, translation ours)¹. This broader view is important because it allows ekphrasis to be studied beyond painting.

Some other definitions of ekphrasis were more limited. Leo Spitzer (1962), cited by Vieira (2017), describes ekphrasis as the poetic description of a work of art. James Heffernan (1993) defines it as “the verbal representation of visual representation” (*apud* Clüver, 2019, p. 239). Although this definition is relevant, it still focuses mostly on visual art. Clüver expands this idea and understands ekphrasis as “the verbal representation of a real or fictitious text composed in a non-verbal sign system or medium” (Clüver, 2019, p. 239). This definition is useful because it allows us to connect ekphrasis with intermediality and with different media.

Clüver’s more recent definition is especially relevant for this research. He states that:

Ekphrasis is an enargetic representation of non-kinetic visual configurations as semiotic objects” and explains that it creates a mental image of visual configurations without showing them directly” (Clüver, 2019, p. 252).

In other words, ekphrasis allows the reader to imagine a visual object or space through language. The object is not directly shown, but the vivid description creates a mental image of it and helps the reader understand its meaning in the narrative. This definition also allows architecture to be analyzed through ekphrasis.

In architectural descriptions, ekphrasis may involve more than visual images. It can also suggest light, texture, sound, temperature, movement. A room or a house, for example,

¹ “ estudos contemporâneos propõem o resgate de elementos da tradição retórica clássica a fim de abranger outros tipos de manifestação artística, como escultura, instalação e arquitetura, nos estudos sobre outros gêneros literários, tais como romances e contos, e também o cinema”.

can be represented in a way that makes the reader feel comfort, fear, oppression, emptiness, or intimacy. For this reason, architectural ekphrasis is important because it shows how space can affect the reader's perception and the characters' experiences.

In conclusion, ekphrasis is not only decorative. It is a device that helps build images, sensations, and meanings. In this research, it is relevant because it allows architectural spaces to be analyzed as active elements in the narrative. These spaces can interact with characters, reveal emotions and preserve memory.

In this research, ekphrasis is understood as a device that uses language to create a vivid image in the audience's mind. In ancient rhetoric, this concept is related to the idea of bringing the subject "vividly before the eyes" (Webb, 2009, p.1). According to Nikolaos in *Progymnasmata*, cited by Webb (2009, p. 203), while narration presents facts in a simple way, ekphrasis "tries to make the listeners into spectators". In other words, the listener does not only receive information, but is almost placed before the scene, like a witness in a theatrical event.

This effect is possible because of *enargeia*, the vividness that "makes one almost see what is being spoken about" (Webb, 2009, p. 198). Therefore, ekphrasis should not be understood as a simple description, since it has a more specific function. As Vieira (2017) explains, an ekphrastic description must create a strong image in the audience's mind and remain in their memory. In this sense, ekphrasis does not only show what something looks like, but it makes the reader visualize an object, place, or space as if it were present.

This concept is important for this research because it helps explain how language can make the reader imagine architectural spaces. Through ekphrasis, space is not presented only as a background in the narrative, but as an element that helps create meaning. This is especially relevant when analyzing houses, rooms, and buildings, since these spaces can influence the atmosphere of the text and the way characters experience the narrative.

Two important concepts helping explain how ekphrasis works are *enargeia* and *periegesis*. In addition, according to Fuhrer and Banaszekiewicz, cited by Vieira (2017), *enargeia* is the audience's ability to imagine something vividly. Vieira (2017) also explains that readers create mental images through their "mind's eyes", using their memories and experiences. Webb (2009), when discussing Theon's definition of ekphrasis in the *Progymnasmata*, states that ekphrasis is a descriptive speech that brings the thing shown

vividly before the eyes (Theon, *apud* Webb, 2009, p. 47). In this way, *enargeia* strengthens a simple description because it gives the impression that the object, place, or scene is almost present.

The second concept is *periegesis*, which can be understood as a guided movement through the description. While *enargeia* makes the image vivid, *periegesis* helps the reader move through the described space. Sardianos, cited by Webb (2009, p. 54), compares *periegesis* to taking a visitor around the city of Athens, showing and commenting on its important places. This idea is especially useful for architectural *ekphrasis*, because buildings and rooms are not only seen from a distance; they can be entered, crossed, and experienced step by step. This movement is related to what Vieira (2017) calls performative *ekphrasis*, which happens when the character interacts with the site by entering, leaving, going up, going down, and circulating through the building. In this process, the description creates a form of *periegesis*, since “by circulating through the building, entering, exiting, going up, going down, as if on a tour, the reader ceases to be a mere spectator and becomes engaged in a virtual performance” (Vieira, 2017, p. 252, our translation).

Revisiting the categories of intermediality, *ekphrasis* can be placed under intermedial references. According to Rajewsky (2005, p. 53), this category happens when one medium uses its own specific means to refer to another medium. The other medium is not materially present, it is only evoked, thematized, or imitated. Rajewsky (2005, p. 52) includes *ekphrasis* as one example of this category. In an *ekphrastic* passage, the literary text does not directly show a painting, a sculpture, or a building. Instead, it uses words to create an image in the reader’s mind.

In Clüver’s terms, *ekphrasis* may be related to intersemiotic transposition, since it involves the movement from a visual or spatial configuration to verbal language. However, Clüver does not reduce *ekphrasis* to translation. For him, *ekphrasis* is better described as a verbal representation that produces a mental image of a non-kinetic visual configuration (Clüver, 2019, p. 252). Therefore, *ekphrasis* can be seen as an intermedial practice that connects literature and architecture through the reader’s mental visualization of space.

1.3 Home

The concept of “home” may seem ambiguous, especially when contrasted with the idea of “house”. For this reason, this section explores the distinction between home and house, as well as their relationship with memory and ekphrasis.

1.3.1 Home vs House

The distinction between house and home is relevant for our analysis. A house can be described as a physical construction, formed by walls, rooms, with specific materials, and architectural design. Home, however, carries a more symbolic and emotional meaning. It is connected to intimacy, memory, protection, imagination, and lived experience. For this reason, the house in the novel is not analyzed only as an architectural object, but also as a place where personal meanings are created.

Bachelard in the *Poetics of Space* (1964) does not establish a strict opposition between house and home. He presents the house as a space of intimacy and inner life. For him(1964), the house is not only a place where people live, but it also protects dreams, memories, and emotions. He states that “the house shelters daydreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace” (Bachelard, 1964, p. 6). If we consider a house in these terms, the concept of home loses its meaning. Taking this into consideration, this study understands the house as a material and architectural space, while home emerges through the experience of inhabiting, remembering, and emotionally relating to that space.

A building may exist as an architectural form, but it becomes home when it is lived and remembered. Rooms, objects, windows, stairs, and materials can carry emotional meanings because they are connected to personal experiences. These material aspects stop being only parts of the construction of a house and become part of the construction of home. For example, a window may no longer be just an architectural element, but a place that offers the view of a beautiful garden. A wall may become the place where children once drew, and a bathroom decorated with rubber ducks may preserve memories of a mother first bathing her children. In this way, home is built not only by architecture, but also by the subject’s relation with space.

Bachelard (1964) also connects the house to the inner world of those who inhabit it. He argues that “all really inhabited space bears the essence of the notion of home” (Bachelard, 1964, p. 5). This perspective shows that home is not simply a place, but a way of experiencing space. Then, to study home in literature, it is needed to study how characters experience the place and how it shapes their emotions because a home carries emotional and symbolic value.

1.3.2 Home and Memory

A person may leave a house physically, but the place can continue to exist through memories, emotions, and imagination. Bachelard (1964) suggests that the houses where we have lived remain inside us through dreams and memories. He states that “through dreams, the various dwelling places in our lives co-penetrate and retain the treasures of former days” (Bachelard, 1964, p. 5) and “we return to them in our night dreams” (Bachelard, 1964, p. 10). Homes are preserved as a remembered place.

This relation between memory and space is connected to Bachelard’s concept of topoanalysis, which he defines as “the systematic psychological study of the sites of our intimate lives” (Bachelard, 1964, p. 8). This discussion can also be connected to Aristotle’s analogy between memory, painting, and internal images. As presented by Webb (2009, p. 112), ancient theories often compared memory to visual impressions, suggesting that sensations leave images in the mind. In this view, memory works like an inner gallery, where past experiences remain as images that can later be revisited.

Memory, however, does not recover places in a neutral or objective way. It transforms them. Bachelard explains that, “in memory recaptured through daydreams,” the attic can become “at once small and large, warm and cool, always comforting” (Bachelard, 1964, p. 10). In this way, the remembered home is not identical to the physical house; it is reshaped by the subject’s emotional experience.

1.3.3 Home, Memory and Ekphrasis

If home is preserved through memory, ekphrasis helps make this remembered space visible through language. In this way, the house is not only remembered by the character, but also reconstructed for the reader through its vivid descriptions.

Memory allows the relationship with a space to continue even when the space itself is no longer accessible. The house may change through time, as details are added, altered, or associated with particular experiences. What remains, therefore, is not necessarily an exact reproduction of the physical space, but an affective image.

Webb's (2009) discussion of *phantasia* helps explain this process. In ancient rhetorical theory, *phantasia* is related to the creation of mental images. Webb (2009) explains that memory and imagination are connected because both depend on images formed in the mind. These images are not physically present, but they can still become vivid through language. For this reason, ekphrasis allows the absent to appear mentally. The character keeps internal images of the house, and through ekphrasis, these images are made visible to the reader.

2 MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME: GETTING TO KNOW THE NOVEL

This chapter provides an overview of *The Glass Room* (2009), the novel analyzed in this study, focusing on the novel's plot, historical and social setting, and the modernist architectural relevance of the house that inspired the fictional one.

2.1 Setting and plot overview.

The Glass Room is a novel by the British author Simon Mawer, published in 2009. Mawer has a recurring interest in Central European history and culture, which can also be seen in works such as *Mendel's Dwarf* (1997) and *Prague Spring* (2018), which engage with Czech contexts.

The novel tells the story of Liesel and Viktor Landauer, a wealthy newly married couple who decide to build a modern house in Czechoslovakia, now known as the Czech Republic. Liesel is one of the main characters of the novel and the central character for this research. Her connection with the house begins before its construction, when the building still exists only as an idea. Viktor, Liesel's husband, is also important to the creation of the house since the idea of the construction comes from his ideals. He seeks modernity and progress. From a social perspective, an innovative and ambitious modernist house requires wealth and privilege.

The historical context is an important factor in the novel. The Landauers have children, and their family life develops while Europe moves toward the Second World War. Given the story's placement in Czechoslovakia, the narrative shows the arrival of political tension, antisemitic persecution, and the growing danger faced by Jewish families. Viktor being Jewish has the Landauers be directly affected by this context. However, because of his wealth and social position, Viktor is able to escape with his family, leaving the house under the care of housekeepers.

Together, Liesel and Viktor represent the beginning of the house's story. They are the ones who idealize it, build it, and first inhabit it. Later, however, the function of the house changes several times. After the Landauers leave, it first becomes a shelter for the servants who remain there. Then, it is taken and used as a laboratory, where Jewish bodies are studied

and measured. At this point, Liesel officially loses her house. In the following years, the building is transformed again: it becomes a gymnasium and, finally, a museum.

The overview above shows Liesel's point of view, that is, unfortunately, an incomplete understanding of her marriage. What she does not know at first is that, right after her first delivery, while the house was still being built, Viktor is unfaithful to her and falls in love with Kata during one of his business trips to Vienna. Kata is a woman from a lower social background who prostitutes herself in order to support her daughter. What begins as a casual relationship becomes more complex and Viktor finds himself attached to her. At a certain point, Kata disappears from Viktor's life, but she returns later, when the political situation in Europe becomes more dangerous and the Second World War approaches. In the middle of this chaos, she looks for shelter and, by coincidence, reaches the Landauers, who are helping refugees. Kata and her daughter live in a small cottage in the Landauers' garden. Later, Kata becomes the children's nanny, and her daughter is raised together with Liesel's children. Liesel receives them kindly, without knowing the real situation behind Kata's presence in the house.

During the family's first fleeing towards Switzerland, Kata travels with them. It is during this journey that Liesel discovers the affair. One night, she leaves her room quietly and hears Viktor in Kata's room. However, she does not react openly or confront him, because she fears that Kata may be placed in an even more difficult situation. Later, the group continues towards Spain, where they struggle to get a ship to the United States. Kata, however, can not continue the journey because she is Jewish, and she leaves her daughter under the care of the Landauer family.

There is an irony in this situation, the house is characterized by the Glass Room, a space associated with transparency, openness, and light, but Liesel's domestic life was marked by a hidden betrayal. She could only picture one image:

[...] just an image that shifted across the screen of memory, people crowded into the Glass room. And the noise, the talk and the laughter, she heard that; and the sound of metal- a knife- against glass, and Viktor being helped up onto a chair and standing there and calling for quiet, and an approximate hush descending so that his voice could rise above the residual chatter to talk of transparency and clarity and how he wanted his house to be like that - transparent and full of light. And all the time he was going on business trips to Vienna and fucking Katalin in the shabby opaque world of some hotel bedroom (Mawer, 2009, p. 204).

2.2 Modernism and the Novel's House Inspiration

According to Rost Architects (2019), Modern architecture does not have one single beginning or one specific building that marks its origin. Instead, it developed from different ideas that appeared in Europe around the turn of the twentieth century. These ideas were connected to progress, technological development, industrialization, and the use of new building materials. Modernist architecture rejected the imitation of historical styles and reduced or removed ornamentation and decorative details. Instead of looking to the past, modern architects searched for a new architectural language that could express the contemporary world. It was during the world wars that:

although devastating, catalyzed the development of many new processes and materials including the production of plastics, composites, metal alloys, and glass. At the end of the war, manufacturers were eager to bring these products to the public markets and try to make a profit (Rost Architects, 2019).

The fictional Landauer House in *The Glass Room* is inspired by Villa Tugendhat, a modernist house located in Brno and the Tugendhat family, who were forced to leave because of the nazi threat. According to the official website of Villa Tugendhat, the house was designed by the renowned architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and his collaborators and built between 1929 and 1930. Its importance lies in its architectural purity and connection with the natural surroundings, the interconnection of rooms, technical and structural design, and use of fine materials. The villa became an icon of modernist housing in Brno, and is the only example of modern architecture in the Czech Republic included in the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage list to date.

3 (DE)CONSTRUCTION OF HOME

In this chapter, the concepts discussed in the previous chapters are used to analyze how the concept of home is constructed, or not, throughout the narrative. The analysis is organized in five stages that dialogue with Liesel's sense of belonging and non-belonging in relation to the space.

3.1 The idea

"Oh yes, we're here" (Mawer, 2009, p. 1) is the first sentence of the novel and represents how meaningful that place is to the speaker. In this case, the character is Liesel, and she is referring to her beloved house, the one built for her and her husband, Viktor, where she built many memories, but was forced to leave due to the Second World War.

The narrative begins in a cyclical structure. The pre-chapter functions as a continuation of the return presented in the final chapter, creating a circular movement that both opens and closes the story. At this initial moment, the reader does not yet know the main events of the plot, but already understands the significance of the house to Liesel.

Chapter One moves back to the beginning of the events, when Liesel's parents give her a plot of land as a wedding present so they can build "something good and solid" (Mawer, 2009, p. 10), as described by them. However, from the very beginning, Viktor makes it clear that a solid, traditional house is not an option for him: "No! We don't want a house that looks like a fortress, all turrets and towers and Gothic windows, nor one that looks like a church. Good God, we're living in the twentieth century, not the fourteenth. The world is moving on" (Mawer, 2009, p. 10). Although the house does not yet exist, it is already possible to imagine what it will be like, the first modernist house in the Czech Republic. In this quotation, Viktor speaks for Liesel, "we don't want," but she does not directly express her own opinion. In contrast, Liesel does not seem to be as modern as her husband or his ideas.

Right after this dialogue, the couple returns to their hotel room in the afternoon, and Viktor attempts to initiate intimacy. She replies nervously, "What are you doing?" and "rather to her surprise, she had expected them to wait until evening" (Mawer, 2009, p. 10). For Liesel, the act of having sex in the afternoon is described as "dispiriting" and "defenceless," and indeed, "a modern thing to do." Here we see the importance of the setting in the narrative, as it

helps us understand Liesel's feelings about modernity and the future house by contrast. The hotel they are staying at reflects a Romantic architectural style, as it "was elaborate and ornate ... clinging to the past ... this is everything our new house will not be," according to Viktor.

After, in the hotel room, when she removes her spectacles, the world around her becomes a "mellow haze of color, as though she had been plunged into a foggy day. Standing there, in the fog, she felt defenseless." (Mawer, 2009, p.10) The presence of the fog, as part of the setting, can represent vulnerability.

During the honeymoon, the Landauer couple meets with their architect, Von Abt, described as "the poet of forms". While discussing the future house, Liesel expresses her concern, saying that "it all seems rather cold." (Mawer, 2009, p.24) In response, Von Abt explains his ideas by drawing lines on a sheet of paper forming a cross-like shape, and asks, "What could be warmer than that?" While Liesel sees modern design as cold, he tries to show that even those forms and lines can be filled with warmth. However, she struggles to understand his perspective.

A few days later, when they visit the site, Liesel is still holding on to her past memories, especially those connected to her childhood with her brother on that hill. The place is described as having "apple trees and a single silver birch. Windfalls rotted amongst the 4141 grass" (Mawer, 2009, p. 30). Despite this, "try as she might, she could not picture anything built in this place. There was nothing but this empty hillside and this view of the city, breathtaking, literally, the wind snatching her breath away" (Mawer, 2009, p. 30).

She recalls, "I used to come up here with my brother... when we were children, the birch tree was our god; we'd sit with the sun on our faces and look at the view, the whole city beyond seemed almost our plaything, a toy town" (Mawer, 2009, p. 30). This shows that, for Liesel, the space is already full of personal meaning. The top of the hill functions as an observation point, and the city, seen from a distance, resembles a framed painting. However, her voice is weakened both physically and symbolically, as "the wind battered her head and snatched her words away" (Mawer, 2009, p. 30), and Viktor quickly changes the subject even though he has heard her all along.

The first Time Liesel 'heard' the house:

The Landauer House! Waiters cruised among the palm fronds. The room was filled with the sound of diners, the murmur of their conversation and the ringing of cutlery

on porcelain, and Rainer von Abt was looking from one to the other of his hosts with that expression of mixed amusement and thoughtfulness, as though to assess the impact of those words, das Landauer Haus! It was the first time that Liesel had heard the house, the fictitious house, the fantasy house, the house of dream and imagination, referred to in terms so concrete (Mawer, 2009, p. 28).

As discussed, she does not visualize the house yet, but now there is a shift from imagination to reality. The repetition of “fictitious house,” the “fantasy house,” and the “house of dream and imagination” may suggest that she had difficulty visualizing the house clearly. When she heard the exclamation “The Landauer House!” something that did not physically exist, made the idea feel real.

3.2 The construction

The house holds deep significance for Liesel because it is connected to her pregnancies and to the raising of her children. The house plans follow a Euclidean sense of perfection, full of rectangular, vertical, and rectilinear forms. As she notices, “there is not a curve in the whole proposal. Her own belly is a curve, something aquatic, oceanic, but not this design for a house. not a curve in sight” (Mawer, 2009, p.42). This shows a sense of not belonging. Liesel continues examining the plan and finally spots a semicircle in a table and a room that is different, made entirely of glass and compares herself and her family to plants in a hot house.

As time passes, the author compares two “gestations”. “The child in Liesel’s womb, the house in Rainer von Abt’s mind. The one convoluted, involute, curved and complex- there are no straight lines in nature- the other simple and linear” (Mawer, 2009, p.44). The first big difference is the shape. The baby growing inside Liesel is full of curves. The author says that “there are no straight lines in nature.” On the other hand, the house is straight. This shows a contrast between the natural world, her baby, and the human made world, the house.

At the same time that Liesel differs from the house, connections can also be identified between her body and the architecture. Her pregnant belly is described as “heavily swollen”. However, right after, the narrator also states that “sometimes the swelling makes her feel big and clumsy; at other times she feels almost like translucent, as though the creature inside her can be seen through the wall of her abdomen” (Mawer, 2009, p. 41). This feeling of

transparency creates a direct analogy with the transparent elements of the house, especially the Glass Room. Both Liesel and the house share the same modality of media.

The way the house is built sounds almost like an injury. The machines dig into the earth, leaving scars and wounds on the hill. It is even compared to a battlefield. This tells us that building something modern often means "breaking" nature first. The house does not just sit on the land; it forces itself into it. In parallel, Liesel was not having an easy delivery. Her pain was relieved with morphine, but as a consequence, her memory was erased, which was important to her. "Any memory of the whole event excised from her mind by scopolamine, a drug culled from henbane and deadly nightshade that kills, among other things, memory, and into this chemical amnesia Otilie was born" (Mawer, 2009, p.45).

In the book, the passage of time is not merely a background element. The paragraphs that precede the house's frame and the baby's birth begin with marks of time: winter, March, and April. In winter, the cold air temperatures represent suspended nature, the grass had a dead look and nothing seems to grow except the baby in Liesel's womb. In March, among the mud, the house started to be built, and for this to happen, the ground needed to be hurt, just like for a baby to be born, the mother needs to suffer. When April comes, then arrives spring and warmth. Just like in nature, warmth is necessary to growth.

The house's materials are concrete and steel pillars, cements, representing hardness and coldness, all industrial materials. From a semiotic perspective, both the house and the birth represent modernity, and the birth becomes an extension of the same modern logic that built the house.

"The house grew, the baby grew" (Mawer, 2009, p. 52). Otilie's first smile, the focus in her eyes as well as the house laying of steel beams, the pouring of concrete... Finally, by the end of April, the house was built. The empty spaces smelled like cement and plaster, the walls were plain and white, the floor was rough and the ceiling well illuminated. But there wasn't a celebration, 'no baptism or naming'. For Liesel, the house feels lifeless, "like contemplating a skeleton and trying to work out how the person would have looked" (Mawer, 2009, p. 52).

As they walk through the house, this feeling becomes stronger:

They looked round the other rooms, the bare spaces that would be bathrooms and bedrooms, Their voices echoed down the stairs and into the living room, the wide and empty expanse below. Canvas hung where the glass would go, casting the space

in shadow, A plank lay abandoned on the floor. There was a bucket with remains of cement in the bottom, and a sheet of newspaper, the title *Ladové Noviny* plainly visible. The three of them walked round in the twilight, trying to picture the place as it would be, the new life that would be enacted there. Instead there was this concrete space, as large as a garage. (Mawer, 2009, p.53)

Once the house is built, Viktor goes to Vienna and meets Kata for the first time, the woman he had a long affair with. At this point, the house is not yet finished. It still needs details such as flooring, furniture, wall coverings, and other elements of interior design. This step is pretty important to Liesel, since “those things that transform a shell into a house” (Mawer, 2009, p.72), even though, from Viktor's perspective, ornaments and decoration are a crime. However, one moment already gives the house its identity: the installation of the glass. As the glaziers place the wide transparent glass, “the empty space between two concrete floors metamorphosed into the Glass Room” (Mawer, 2009, p. 64). The space is immediately transformed into a “palace of light,” where “light bounced off the chrome pillars,” “reverberating from the glass” (Mawer, 2009, p. 64). For Liesel, this produces a feeling of freedom: “You feel so free,” she says, the sensation of space makes her believe that everything is possible.

It is time for the final touches and the following passage shows the passing of time and the way the house is being filled:

Curtains of black and natural Shantung silk and beige velvet slid on their runners, closing off areas of the Glass Room as quietly and discreetly as a whispered aside. Carpets – hand-woven woollen rugs – were laid down in their precise geometrical place. And then finally the furniture arrived, the fitted items first: shelves and cupboards for the bedroom, sideboards for the dining area, shelving for the library. Men in white coats moved back and forth like attendants in a medical clinic. Carpenters assembled the circular table. And then came the chairs, the Landauer chairs for the dining table, the Liesel chairs in the sitting area, their steel frames reflecting the light and their upholstery mirroring the carpets, and every piece fitting into the whole, which was like a puzzle in which pieces slotted together in a pattern that it was both intricate and logical (Mawer, 2009, p. 73).

Here, this is not only a description of the interior of the house; we are guided to see it. With each mention of new furniture and additions, our mental image of the place is constructed little by little, one element at a time. Everything appears precise and meticulous, fitting perfectly like a puzzle, and so is Liesel, finding her place in that house. There is also

light, and whispering, symbols of clarity and intimacy. After this passage, the house seems less cold and more delicate.

3.3 The inhabitation

When Liesel and Viktor moved into the house, it was the beginning of December. She was pregnant again. The weather outside was cold, and “sleet dashed itself against the windows and the air from the boiler in the basement breathed upwards through the vents of the Glass Room to bring a warmer, drier, and cleaner atmosphere that vaguely reminded Liesel of a spring day” (Mawer, 2009, p. 73). Although it was winter outside, the interior of the house felt like spring to her. This contrast is important in the way that it presents the house as a shelter and a protective space.

During the housewarming party, the house is presented more as a work of art than as a home. It is “like the opening of an art exhibition” (Mawer, 2009, p.75), and the guests look at the house as something to be observed, discussed, and judged. In this moment, the house is exposed to the public gaze, instead of being experienced only as an intimate space. This is reinforced by questions such as “Is the Landauer House habitable?” (Mawer, 2009, p.79), which shows that its function as a home is still questioned by others.

While Viktor is successfully travelling for work, Liesel remains inside the domestic space of the “cool and luminous house” (Mawer, 2009, p.82). She walks barefoot through the rooms and feels connected to the house, she is described and compared as a “Mistress of her new domain she floats through the ethereal house just as the house itself, supported by glass and artifice, floats above the ground.” (Mawer, 2009, p.82). Her pregnancy and the house almost become a single unit. It is during her pregnancies that Liesel and the house are most connected.

They become more used to the house as it gradually becomes part of their routine. As the war approaches and the number of refugees increases, Viktor is invited to join a committee that helps refugees, and he suggests using the house to organize a charity recital. Later, the house is also used to shelter some refugees. It is in this context that Viktor meets Kata again, now as a refugee and she starts living in a chateau in the garden with her daughter until the Landauers also need to flee.

3.4 The exile

In contrast with the scene of the house receiving its final touches, the Glass Room now appears almost empty.

The piano stands where it has always stood, in the space behind the onyx wall, but, except for that and a couple of chairs, all the rest has gone. In some ways this has returned the room to its moment of birth, when the builders and decorators left it and the furniture had yet to arrive. It is just the space, the light, the white, just the gleaming pillars, just the onyx wall and the partition of Macassar wood. The cool, calm rationality of the place minds, untroubled by any of the irrationality that human beings would impose upon it. They pause for a moment and look (Mawer, 2009, p.183).

At this moment, Liesel questions the emotional attachment to the house. She asks “Is it rational to have a sentiment about a place?” (Mawer, 2009, p.183). From a rational perspective, “a place is just space enclosed, volume sequestered by concrete and glass” (Mawer, 2009, p.183). Emotionally, the house is more than that, and she desperately missed it, asking “We’ll come back. Will we? When?” (Mawer, 2009, p.183). The house’s loss is compared to “having a limb amputated” (Mawer, 2009, p.227). That reinforces how deeply attached she is to the space. She lost a part of herself. Once again, the house is compared to Liesel. In the uncertainty of a possible return, she looks at the house and says goodbye:

She stands for a moment, one last moment, looking at the Glass Room. Rain runs down the windows like tears from her eyes. The light is diffused, refracted, blurred by the water; just as her memories, distorted by time and mood. [...] When will she be here again? (Mawer, 2009, p.184).

As she prepares to leave, the Glass Room seems to mirror her emotional state. The rain running down the windows is compared to tears, attributing human emotions to the building and reinforcing the intimate bond between the character and the house. At the same time, the light is described as “diffused, refracted, blurred by the water,” anticipating how Liesel’s memories of the house will later become blurred by time and emotion. This idea is consistent with Bachelard’s (1964) argument that the remembered house is not preserved as an exact material reality, but is continually reshaped.

As time passes, the idea of return becomes increasingly distant, and her family slowly begins to adapt to exile. Even though Liesel tells herself that soon it will be over and they will be back.”, summer has passed, winter has arrived, and the possibility becomes less certain.

Liesel’s exile is also marked by the discovery of Viktor’s affair with Kata. This makes the departure even more painful, because the loss of the house is accompanied by an emotional rupture in her marriage. The house had been associated with transparency, family, and promise, but Liesel leaves it carrying the knowledge of betrayal.

The previous question of being sentimental about the house is answered by her following actions. When she hears that it might be demolished, that possibility makes her burst out and cry. She is not weeping because of the house’s structure, but for her lost life, lost love, and the moments in which she was happy in that place she can not return to:

It was only at the suggestion that the house might actually be demolished that Liesel finally broke down and wept, not only for the beautiful house on the hillside in Město, but for her lost life and her lost love and because of the whole world of exile in which reality is elsewhere and the life you live seems to be something happening to someone else, a dream world that hesitates on the edge of nightmare. The children had never seen their mother weep (Mawer, 2009, p. 211).

All she wants is for the war to be over so she may return. She starts revisiting those moments and the memories of the house do not remain static, as in a painting or picture, but it guides both Liesel and the reader through the house, recreating space. She walks around the terrace, where the children’s toys are deeply connected to memories of family life. Then she enters the rooms and calmly goes down the stairs until she reaches the Glass Room. The house is preserved in her memory “just as it really was”:

But will it ever be over? That’s what I want to know. Will it ever be over? It was terrible when we left, you know that? Our beloved house. Viktor’s and mine, but yours as well. It was like having a limb amputated. We were so happy there. You know I compose it in my mind? It’s like recreating it in a dream. I walk round the terrace and pick up the children’s toys. I go inside and walk into the rooms, Ottilie’s, Martin’s, and their bathroom with the ducks — you’d be appalled to see them, Rainer, a line of rubber duck silhouettes following their mother across the tiles and into the bath. Then I go down into the Glass Room — twelve steps to the curve, and then round and down nine more, and the space opens out around me just as it really was. I’m there, right there, where we were so happy. (Mawer, 2009, p. 227)

When she says, “I’m there, right there, where we were so happy” (Mawer, 2009, p.227), the house momentarily becomes present again. She desperately wants to return to her

house as it was. She states, “I don’t feel I belong here. Viktor says he belongs anywhere. He claims to be a citizen of the world, but I miss home and friends much more” (Mawer, 2009, p. 227). Unlike her husband, who adapts to modern mobility, Liesel remains emotionally attached. She does not see that place merely as a house, but as a home: the home where happiness, family life, and belonging were once possible. The cheating event also contributes to that feeling.

She remembers the sensations of the house: its coldness, reflections, view, materiality, and abstractness. Unfortunately the place she remembers is no longer the same, and the physical house does not belong to them anymore, and even if it was still theirs, the happy family life connected to it cannot be recovered. For this reason, the house now “exists only in the manner of dreams” (p. 304).

She dreams. She dreams of cold. She dreams of glass and light, the Glass Room washed with reflection, and the cool view across the city of rooftops, the cold view through the trees, the crack of snow beneath your boots. She dreams of a place that is without form or substance, that exists only in the manner of dreams, shifting and insubstantial, diffuse, diverse:

space

glass, walls of glass

a quintet of chairs, placed with geometrical precision

a sweep of shining floor – ivory linoleum

white and black

the gleam of chrome

These things move, evolve, transform in the way they do in dreams, changing shape and form and yet, to the dreamer, remaining what they always were: *der Glasraum*, *der Glastraum*, the single letter-change metamorphosing from one into the other; the Glass Room become the Glass Dream. (Mawer, 2009, p.304)

According to Webb (2009, p. 112), ancient theories of memory compare memory to visual impressions, suggesting that sensations leave images in the mind. Liesel’s dream works like that: the house is no longer present as a physical space, but its images remain. The passage emphasizes the elements “move, evolve, transform” (Mawer, 2009, p.304), this happens because the house is not stable, but fluid. In Bachelard (1964) the houses where we have lived do not disappear completely; through dreams, they return and preserve the “treasures of former days” (Bachelard, 1964, p. 5). During Liesel’s exile, the Glass Room survives in this way.

She dreams. In the hot night, alone in her bed beneath the heavy hand of a mosquito net, she dreams. She dreams of Katalin and she dreams of Hana. And when the heat wakes her in the morning, the joy and the ecstasy of the night vanish as quickly as the bats that spend the night circling the house in search of prey. In the day there are only flies and lizards and this box of a room with the white walls and a French window onto the veranda and cane chairs and a brightly coloured bedspread in some kind of Aztec design. Geckos cling to the ceiling as avariciously as she clings to her memories. But memories are not constant, being, like dreams, evanescent things that shift and change, metamorphose and vanish” (Mawer, 2009, p.305).

While in her dream Liesel returns to the Glass Room, where the house is open, cold, bright, and made of glass and reflection, in reality she wakes up surrounded by unfamiliar objects. The room is closed, hot, and uncomfortable. The contrast emphasizes her unhappiness. She clings to her memories just as the geckos cling to the ceiling.

3.5 The return

The novel contains two sections entitled *Return*: one at the beginning, before the narrative moves back to the past, and another near the end. The final “Return” can be read as the continuation of the first one. This structure creates a circular movement in the novel, since the story begins with Liesel’s return to the house and later returns to that same moment.

When Liesel returns to the house many years later, the return is not merely physical. She could see the house with “ the only eye she possessed now, her mind’s eye, so much a cliché but so vividly a fact ” that “ created “ an image that was almost as real as seeing” (p. 2). The house no longer belongs to her officially, since it was taken away, but emotionally it was her house. A house that has been transformed by time, history, and different inhabitants.

She is now an old woman, blind, and her house is a museum. Even before entering the house, she recognizes the place through movement and memory. The slope of the road, the curve upwards, and the trajectory of the car awaken something that “was still engraved on her mind” (Mawer, 2009, p. 1).

According to Bachelard (1964) the houses we have inhabited remain preserved within us through memory and dream. Her return shows that the house was never fully lost internally and remained stored as an intimate space. She does not need visual perception to recognize it, she has a mental image. Since she is now blind, the house is reconstructed through memory,

bodily movement, touch, smell, sound, and spatial perception. Her contact with the house is entirely sensory.

In this return, represented in the opening pages of the novel, Liesel's contact with the house is mainly sensory. She "feels the volume", "smells the light from the expanse of plate glass", "senses the people", "smells the Macassar wood", and even though her husband is no longer alive and physically present, she can still feel his "taste.", referring to his aesthetic vision. Inside the house, Liesel moves as if she were following an internal map. She remembers the position of the pillar, the curve of the glass wall, the steps, the balustrade, and the descent into the Glass Room. Her body seems to know the house before anyone explains it to her. The passage repeats the same movement she had imagined in exile: "Twelve steps to the curve, and then round and down nine more" (p. 3).

Through the material modality, the house is perceived through its concrete elements: glass, the onyx wall, wood, curtains, rosewood panels, the staircase, and finally, the Glass Room itself. These materials carry memory. The spatiotemporal modality appears in the way the scene shows the present movement and past memory together. She is walking in the present, but each part of the house is a memory from the past. She knows and feels all dimensions around her.

She was aware of others- shapes, presences- crowding in behind her. The door closes. Home. She was home. Thirty years. A generation. She knew the walls around her, the rosewood panels facing her, to her left the stairs turning down into the living room. Sounds, the mere whisper of hearing, gave her the dimensions of the space (Mawer, 2009, p.3).

As Liesel continues moving through the house, she pauses and searches for "pictures". There are no pictures in that room, but there were pictures in her mind. The "pictures" are mental images, fragments of the house. Drawing on Webb's (2009) discussion of memory and internal images, galleries of the mind, memory is understood as a space where images are preserved internally, and Liesel has a lot of pictures in her gallery.

For example, when it was dark and Viktor left the curtains open so that the windows became mirrors casting the whole room in duplicate, the chairs, the table, the onyx wall, reflected out there in the night. And his mirrored image walking back and forth, back and forth (Mawer, 2009, p.4).

At that moment, Liesel becomes a historical figure connected to the museum. The architectural work is now a monument, and the people around her want to greet her, touch her, and shake her hand as if she were part of the exhibition. However, this public attention suffocates her. She feels trapped, but “she had never felt this in the Glass Room before” (Mawer, 2009, p. 391). The space is no longer the same one she preserved in her memories. While the others remain inside to appreciate the house as part of European architecture, Liesel goes to the terrace to fully feel her house without any disturbances. By the end “Everything changes. Even buildings” (Mawer, 2009, p. 394).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This research analyzed how architectural space contributes to the (de)construction of home and (non) belonging in Simon Mawer's *The Glass Room*. It was possible to observe that the meaning of home is neither fixed nor immediately established. Instead, it is gradually formed through inhabiting, sensory perceptions and emotional attachment.

Through vivid representations created by ekphrasis, the readers are allowed to perceive the house beyond its material existence, understand the characters' emotions and decisions, even when these are not explicitly stated by the narrator.

When the house is still only an idea, Liesel does not yet have enough emotional connection to see it as home. In this first stage, the house appears mainly as her husband's project and as a promise of future happiness there. Liesel accepts this promise, but her attachment is more strongly connected to the site itself, which already carried memories of her childhood with her brother, who died serving the First World War. Before the house becomes a home, the land already functions as a space marked by memory.

During the construction of the house, there are both contrasts and parallels between Liesel and the project. On the one hand, her pregnant body, round and organic, contrasts with the straight, rigid, rectangular forms of the modernist house. On the other hand, they are both suffering a process of birth and pain. Liesel's delivery is described as intensely painful, so intense that morphine is necessary, and her memory of the event is "stolen" from her (Mawer, 2009, p.45). Similarly, the house is also "born" through violence, as the foundations hurt and wound the land as materials are forced into the ground. As the house grows, her child also grows, creating a symbolic relation between motherhood and architecture.

The feeling of home becomes stronger when Liesel begins to inhabit the house and experience it throughout her daily life. Gradually, it stops being only a modernist architectural object, and becomes an affective space. It is through living, touching, hearing, seeing, and moving thorough the space that the meaning of home appears for Liesel.

However, this meaning becomes unstable again when she is forced to leave the house. At first, she consoles herself with the hope of returning. Later, after discovering her husband's betrayal, it is possible to realize that the happiness once associated with the house cannot be

fully recovered. The home that took so long to build can no longer be experienced the same way, either physically because of war damage, its function having changed through transformations, nor emotionally, because Liesel herself has changed. From this moment on, the house becomes increasingly connected to memory.

When Liesel finally returns to the house, it is no longer her home anymore as it once was. Although she is physically present in the building, everything has changed. The space that once served as the stage of her daily life has been transformed into a museum. The place where she lived with her family and where her children once played is now occupied by strangers who contemplate the house as an architectural object.

As a result, the concept of home is not defined by architecture, ownership or permanence in the space. Home is constructed through lived experience, sensory perception and emotional attachment that can be perceived through ekphrasis and modalities of media. The Landauer House remains, but the home Liesel once knew belongs to the past. It survives not in the museum or in the restored building, but in her memories, and it will still be preserved as long as she remembers. Home, therefore, lies in the subjective relationship the character establishes with the space.

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