



Mansfield's short story from Woolf's modernist view

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ABSTRACT. This paper pays a tribute to the narrative technique of Katherine Mansfield, through the study on the spatiotemporal fragmentation present in the short story *Bliss*. Her creation process highlights marks of the story of atmosphere and the temporal fragmentation of the narrative. It is possible to observe that the text is based upon the spatiotemporal displacement of the protagonist in a futile and conservative London society. Theoretically, this work explores the intertextuality perspectives of the modernist narrative according to Virginia Woolf. About the spatiotemporal displacement, it goes through the concepts of space and heterotopia by Gaston Bachelard and Michel Foucault.

Keywords: modern short story, temporal fragmentation, Katherine Mansfield.

O conto de Mansfield pelo olhar modernista de Woolf

RESUMO. Este artigo faz uma homenagem à técnica narrativa de Katherine Mansfield por meio do estudo da fragmentação espaço-temporal no conto *Bliss*. Seu processo de criação ressalta as marcas do conto de atmosfera e da fragmentação da narrativa. Observa-se que o texto parte do devaneio psicológico da protagonista em uma sociedade londrina fútil e conversadora. Teoricamente, investigam-se as perspectivas intertextuais do conto de Mansfield com as renovações estéticas modernas, conforme Virginia Woolf. Sobre o deslocamento espaço-temporal, exploram-se os conceitos de espaço e de heterotopia, de Gaston Bachelard e Michel Foucault.

Palavras-chave: conto moderno, fragmentação temporal, Katherine Mansfield.

Introduction

The English modern literature has produced sophisticated literary models by carrying out radical aesthetic experimentations based on temporal fragmentation. Among the writers that most gained notoriety worldwide are James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Katherine Mansfield. Particularly, the two female writers kept in touch during the development of their experimental texts at the end of the second decade of the 20th century. Moreover, they wrote literary criticism for different English newspapers. With this double function, of writers and literary critics, they debated and reflected about the innovations that were necessary for the production of a modern style.

With this aim, Mansfield and Woolf invested in a fragmented narrative without big events, highlighting the inner development of characters, which experienced a personal displacement in a short space of time. These marks, proper of the modern narrative, had as reference the aesthetics of the story of atmosphere, proposed by the fiction of the Russian author Anton Tchekhov. From this intertextuality, the modern short story should have the ambition of representing life as a bright halo that

would endow literary pages with the flexibility and lightness necessary for a literature that was adequate to the new cultural situations of that period (LEHMANN, 1989).

By incorporating some elements of Tchekhov's aesthetics, Mansfield's narrative acquired its own style after a lot of experimentation with music rhythmical elements and with the incorporation of poetic elements. This process of literary creation, for being complex and dense, had its ups and downs, and, for many times, was not recognized by its peers. However, since the beginning, her style had several passionate readers, as the insightful and jealous Virginia Woolf. The look of the English writer upon her Neo-Zealander contemporary is not passive; between both of them, there was an intensive dialogue marked by admiration and barbs. Woolf regarded Mansfield as the greatest short story writer of her time, in spite of being the most avid critic of her aesthetic experimentations.

Based on the contact between Katherine Mansfield and Virginia Woolf, and on the modern fiction proposal suggested by the latter, this article is divided into two parts, to defend the hypothesis that the process of psychological introspection of the central character of the short story *Bliss* (1920), by Mansfield,

undergoes a spatiotemporal displacement that interconnects the concern about aesthetic renewals with the concern about contextualizing the customs of London society. Said double concern is a mark of Mansfield's modern fiction, because it stresses the sophistication of her aesthetic style, registering a resistance against the social standards of that age.

The first part investigates how the quest for a modern style was articulated by the literary criticism and by the records in the diaries and letters of Woolf and Mansfield; the second one analyzes how the spatiotemporal displacement of the protagonist in *Bliss* constitutes a consistent form of adjusting the introspective style to the modern aesthetics. Methodologically, the concept of the spatial poetics proposed by Gaston Bachelard articulates with the heterotopic displacements suggested by Michael Foucault. To the former, the space of the house represents a protective bond to the modern subject. (BACHELARD, 1994). The latter, in turn, defends that there are several spaces that can be considered 'heterotopic', for being marked by the idea of escape and displacement (FOUCAULT, 2015). Thus, we analyze how, within the space of the house itself, the protagonist of *Bliss* goes through a heterotopia of avoidance of and shock with reality.

From a comparative perspective, we analyzed how Mansfield's introspective narrative adds new elements to the realist tradition. This movement between the conception of text of that time and the literary criticism is indispensable for the identification of the innovations in her aesthetics, because

[...] the work can no longer be seen as something finished moving untouchable in time and space, but as a changeable object that suffers the effect of the readings that transform it (CARVALHAL, 2010, p. 70)¹.

Therefore, our objective is to read this author, taking into account her aesthetic concerns and the criticisms she received from Virginia Woolf, which highlighted her lean and precise poetic rhythm, valuing life as something unpredictable (WOOLF, 2014).

Still based on compared studies, it is worth pointing out that the modern context questioned tradition when problematizing the themes, images and narrative strategies of canonic texts. Without disregarding previous experiences, modern writers wanted, above all, a model that was adequate to the fragmentation of London life. Therefore, this

process of renewal of narrative and poetic techniques involves the exploration of intertextuality as an innovative mechanism for textual creation (NITRINI, 2010).

Among praises and barbs

At the end of the second decade of the 20th century, London was experiencing a cultural ebullition. Mansfield and Woolf were writing to newspapers and being in contact with several aesthetic experiences before the general audience. In addition to their own texts – *The voyage out* (1915), by Woolf, and *Prelude* (1918), by Mansfield –, deemed as innovative, they had a contact with many other experimentations, in both prose and poetry. Moreover, they were part of groups of intellectuals that held intense debates about the concepts of vanguardism and of the renewal of British arts, as the Bloomsbury².

Virginia Woolf, for instance, had access to the first part of the fabulous romance *Ulysses*, by James Joyce, work that represents the apex of the modern experimentation for bringing the news of the stream of consciousness. These different aesthetic innovations can be summed up as part of the constant search for new creative processes that were in the air (LEHMANN, 1989). There was a collective interest in renewal and experimentation, heavily influenced by the vanguardism spirit that hovered over Western Europe.

Involved by the spirit of creation of a new narrative aesthetics, Mansfield begins exploring some aspects of the story of atmosphere masterfully. She renews this style from the sentimental ambiguities of her characters that live personal reveries, in opposition to the apparent peacefulness of their ordinary lives. Regarding the introspective technique, already used by Russian writers, Nitrini emphasizes that "[...] originality ceases to be a lightning or an illumination, being transformed into a metamorphosis or alchemy" (NITRINI, 2010, p. 142)³.

Thus, among the marks of the story of atmosphere and Mansfield's poetic model, there is a perspicacious form of renewing the narrative rhythm through the spatiotemporal displacement of her characters. In this process, the aesthetic aspects of this type of story start to be used as a matrix of the

¹ This piece is a free translation "[...] a obra não pode mais ser vista como algo acabado a deslocar-se intocável no tempo e no espaço, mas como um objeto mutável por efeito das leituras que a transformam" (CARVALHAL, 2010, p. 70).

² This Group organized intellectual and artistic meetings to debate the course of arts and of the English politics between 1909 and the 1930's. Virginia Woolf and her sister, the modernist painter Vanessa Bell, attended said meetings, influenced by their younger brother. From this group of influential and active intellectuals, Duncan Grant, Clive Bell and Leonard Woolf stand out, among others.

³ This piece is a free translation "[...] a originalidade deixa de ser um raio ou uma iluminação, transformando-se numa metamorfose ou alquimia" (NITRINI, 2010, p. 142).

modern rhythm. In some moments, suspense is used as part of the poetic progression of the narrative. In this 'textual metamorphosis', Mansfield also takes into account the specificities of London society, reporting its hypocrisy and fondness of futilities.

As the result of a new literary model that is not born by chance, Mansfield recognizes the different interferences that her creation process has suffered from other authors. Thus, intertextuality is part of the creation process, because, among the texts, it is possible to see a web of aesthetic and cultural connections that her art carries. It is a continuous process, as it quests for the renewal of a literary model (NITRINI, 2010). In this sense, the intertextualities stress the concern of an artist attentive to the details of her generation, because she is attentive to the criticisms of her contemporaries.

Her aesthetic renewal can be found in some particularities, as the spatiotemporal displacement constructed in *Bliss*. Narrated inside the space of a London house, this short story describes the daydreaming state of Bertha, immersed into the ecstasy of passion. From the poetic perspective, it is understood that "The house, the bedroom, the garret in which we were alone, furnished the framework for an interminable dream" (BACHELARD, 1994, p. 15).

This inner movement of the protagonist shows that she looks for refuge in an intimate space. This is possible, especially when taking into consideration that she experiences a heterotopia, an imaginary displacement (FOUCAULT, 2015). In the short story, Bertha's heterotopia is driven by the ecstasy of an overwhelming passion that pushes her to out of the space of the house. For her, the world was perfect, even though she did not take part in her daughter's education and was blind to the fragility of her marriage.

Thereby, this story is fruit of the experimentation of a poetic model of narrating. The critical and personal clashes between her and Virginia Woolf illustrate how much such narrative model was part of her literary ambitions. Both had moments of many dialogues, but, united by the devotion to literature and divided by their rivalry as writers, they found each other extremely attractive, but quite annoying (BELL, 1988). In spite of that, Woolf, for many times, points out that Mansfield's literature is the closest one to the aesthetic aspirations of her generation.

Both writers maintained a fierce dispute for prestige among London intellectuals. Virginia Woolf registered in her Diary, on May 28, 1918, how ambiguous her relationship with Mansfield was.

Her theory was that she could reach in Mansfield what she saw as a solid rock, through the dense mist and many pores that marked and disoriented most of their friends. It was her love for writing (WOOLF, 2014).

This attitude of respect is not always maintained. In August of the same year, Woolf has a crisis of jealousy when commenting on how much Mansfield is arrogant with the literary project that supports the short story *Bliss*, published for the first time in a newspaper of that period. The comment makes the jealous clear:

I threw down *Bliss* with the exclamation 'She's done for!' Indeed I don't see how much faith in her as a woman or writer can survive that sort of story. I shall have to accept the fact that, I'm afraid, that her mind is a very thin soil, laid an inch or two deep upon very barren rock (WOOLF, 2014, p. 43).

Returning the indelicacy of her friend, in the following year, Mansfield, as a literary critic, produces a text questioning Virginia Woolf's retrocession for reusing old narrative strategies in *Night and Day*. According to her, Woolf had appealed to a world that was given as dead forever; Mansfield regards said work, new and original, as a ship in the ocean, unaware of what was happening – a romance in the tradition of the English romance, that made their contemporaries feel old and cold (MANSFIELD apud BELL, 1988).

With this bitter remark, Mansfield was merciless with Virginia's second romance, linking her to the tradition of the English romance. However, the tone between both of them was not always of attack and confrontation. During social visits, they exchanged many ideas about their literary experiences. Woolf registers in her diary, on March, 1919, that she had with Katherine what she had never had with any other clever woman: a sensation of well-being and interest that, she supposed, was due to the fact that Katherine so genuinely appreciated the precious art of writing, even if in a different way (WOOLF, 2014). Thus, they had the same goal of trying new forms of narrating.

This process of critical reception of both writers is fundamental for the advancement of the debate around a modern narrative model. By reading and criticizing each other's work, they contribute to the maturation of a modernist rhythm that explored the conflicts of modernity. Particularly in the short story, the experiences of the Neo-Zealander author are more successful than those of the British. Virginia Woolf recognizes said progress in the technique in atmosphere by Mansfield when commenting the short story *Prelude*, giving in and

identifying her rival's originality. She sees that text has some beauty, admits that it is a bit melancholic and well irrigated by one of those ordinary realities of Mansfield, but considers it has the living strength and the autonomy of a work of art (WOOLF, 2014).

Following the tracks of experimentation, Virginia Woolf dedicates herself to the construction of a series of short stories that value the quest for a new language that rupture spatiotemporal overlaps. Breaking with the traditional narrative, Woolf releases her short story *Kew Gardens* (1919), which soon receives particular praises from Mansfield, according to whom it had the exact gesture, and was a turning point (MANSFIELD apud WOOLF, 2014). It is worth highlighting that this point, which fragments the time-space relation, was achieved by Virginia Woolf in her romances of the following decade, such as *Jacob's Room* (1922) and *Miss Dalloway* (1925).

Therefore, the intellectual and artistic relationship between the two greatest modernist female writers of the English language contributes to the enhancement of the narrative techniques of that time. Among successes and less sophisticated projects, both Mansfield and Woolf recognize each other's contribution to the development of the English poetic prose. The next part analyzes how this technique applies to the construction of the spatiotemporal displacement of *Bliss* protagonist. Such narrative strategy can be seen as a milestone in the modernization of Katherine Mansfield's fiction.

Mansfield's modern short story

Bliss presents the narrative model that most approximates to the modernist purpose of both writers. It develops an original model through the way it explores the story of atmosphere set in a bourgeois and futile London. The text narrates the euphoric state of Bertha Young who, in love with Pearl Fulton, organizes a dinner to receive friends. In face of the upcoming event, in a state of ecstasy, Bertha feels "[...] radiant, with smiling, trembling lips, with big dark eyes and an air of listening, waiting for something ... divine to happen" (MANSFIELD, 2011, p. 02). It is a double displacement, because Bertha projects herself to the outside of the family space, and loses herself in a personal and particular time. With that, *Bliss* stresses the protagonist's daydreaming as the common thread of the story. Her sentimental state is surrounded by a mysterious tone. Hence, the narrator gives hints that not everything is so perfect.

The protagonist's state also refers to the psychological universe, masterfully created by

Tchekhov. The aesthetic line that brings both narratives closer, is very fine, because, right ahead, with the contextualization of an unrequited love, Mansfield puts an unusual light over her narrative, endowing it with a properly modern touch. Thus, at first sight, the borders between tradition and experimentation around which literature used to walk become overshadowed, since

[...] 'the dialogue' between texts is not a calm nor a peaceful process, because, being a space into which textual and extra-textual structures are inserted, texts are a place of conflict (CARVALHAL, 2010, p. 53, emphasis added)⁴.

The modernist singularities in *Bliss*, little by little, make room to an introspective narrative that does not stop satirizing the society of appearances. In her reveries, Bertha cannot see reality, because she is limited to the subterfuges of her path towards personal satisfaction. In the psychological accounting, she sums a good relationship with her husband:

Harry and she were as much in love as ever, and they got on together splendidly and were really good pals. She had an adorable baby. They didn't have to worry about money. They had this absolutely satisfactory house and garden (MANSFIELD, 2011, p. 8).

Aware of the delicacy of the moment – surrendering to a delirious passion –, Bertha looks for excuses to keep herself attached to her ordinary life. It is worth highlighting that this type of love, which overcomes the barrier of gender and of the concept of bourgeois marriage, was part of the innovative proposal of the modernist writer. Both she and Virginia Woolf present several male characters that do not fit into the behavioral standards of that era. However, such homoaffective relationships are always tied to the British context. In the case of Bertha, the idea of social stability works as an anchor for her deliriums, preventing a fatal daydreaming. Thus, she holds on to the image of the house, which "[...] constitutes a body of images that give mankind proofs or illusions of stability" (BACHELARD, 1994, p. 17).

So, embedded in her private reveries, the protagonist will walk around the spaces of the house as if she was taking refuge inside herself. Throughout this inner path, she lives in between reality and dream. Thus, it is possible to observe that she lives in between the utopia of a perfect marriage

⁴ This piece is a free translation "[...] o 'diálogo' entre os textos não é um processo tranquilo nem pacífico, pois, sendo os textos um espaço onde se inserem dialeticamente estruturas textuais e extratextuais, eles são um local de conflito" (CARVALHAL, 2010, p. 53, grifo do autor).

and the heterotopia of a platonic love. To Michael Foucault, what distinguishes utopia from heterotopia is the relationship of these spaces with reality: "Utopias are sites with no real place [...]", because "[...] they are fundamentally unreal spaces", whereas heterotopias are real counter-sites (FOUCAULT, 2015, p. 3).

In her euphoric state, Bertha sees herself totally in love with her family, with her husband, with her little daughter and with her friend, because she is a being "[...] overcome, suddenly by a feeling of bliss - absolute bliss!" (MANSFIELD, 2011, p. 1). Thus, *Bliss* describes a woman who lives a heterotopia, an affective and personal spatiotemporal displacement. She takes refuge in the sensation of ecstasy, which disregards domestic issues. Thereby, in the ambivalences of this space, her displacement from reality has as function to show "[...] a space of illusion that exposes every real space [...] as still more illusory" (FOUCAULT, 2015, p. 8). In the short story, this illusion can be identified by the euphoric state of the character that goes through several emotional rhythms.

In several passages before the dinner, Bertha's inner state is marked by completeness and satisfaction and she did not know how to express this sensation, or what to do about it (FOUCAULT, 2015). However, this existential ecstasy, for some moments, is interrupted by Bertha's suspicions, something intrigued her;

[...] though they had been about together and met a number of times and really talked, Bertha couldn't make her out. Up to a certain point Miss Fulton was rarely, wonderfully frank, but the certain point was there, and beyond that she would not go (MANSFIELD, 2011, p. 6).

The scarce information about the woman she admired, who provoked such a psychological lack of control, caused in her a sensation of incompleteness.

With this suspense, the short story proposes a mystery atmosphere around Pearl, because she is described only through Bertha's sensations and feelings. Even though she suspected of something, the protagonist remains in her spatiotemporal displacement, which suggests an escape from reality. Such reveries break with the 'traditional time' to value the 'inner time' of her feelings. In this case, time is precarious and futile (FOUCAULT, 2015). With the hints of the danger in which Bertha is, the narrator registers that not everything is going so well.

Besides Bertha's introspection, Mansfield's poetic model seeks to register the social aspects of London bourgeois family. Such perspective becomes

evident in the satirical tone in the description of the eccentricity of the guests in contrast with the happiness of the protagonist. Among them, Norman Knight, who seemed "[...] a very intelligent monkey - who had even made that yellow silk dress out of scraped banana skins" (MANSFIELD, 2011, p. 10). In the midst of pathetic and futile scenes, Bertha's guests are arriving. Such narrative conception registers in a subtle manner how much personal eccentricities were valued to the detriment of a collective social view.

Contrarily to this social conception, the story dives into the details of Bertha's overwhelming passion for Pearl. The homoaffective perspective is also part of the artistic project of both Woolf and Mansfield. They were openly bisexual and took these experiences to literature, peculiarly recognizing androgyny as proper of men and women. This theory about androgyny was narrated to the extreme in *Orlando* (1928), by Virginia Woolf.

In Mansfield's story, Bertha, in her individual ecstasy, appears to be anesthetized before the indifference of her beloved woman. Without proofs of this love, the suspicions are soon neutralized by her sentimental dedication. After dinner, the climate between the two women acquires a tone of suspense, because Pearl does not meet Bertha's desires. Such threatening perspective grows stronger when both come closer to the garden:

Although it was so still it seemed, like the flame of a candle, to stretch up, to point, to quiver in the bright air, to grow taller and taller as they gazed - almost to touch the rim of the round, silver moon (MANSFIELD, 2011, p. 16).

The image of the illuminated pear tree condensates the apex of Bertha's spatial displacement. In this case, the tree can be seen as a spiritual limit of this woman that transcends her physical body. Bachelard emphasizes that, in the poetics of space, the tree is incorporated as a symbol of the human limit of reverie. To him, "[...] the tree, like every genuine living thing, is taken in its being that 'knows no bounds' Its limits are mere accidents" (BACHELARD, 1994, p. 200), emphasis added). In the case of Mansfield's story, the pear tree is explored to portray all of Bertha's sentimental burden and her state of ecstasy.

In this sense, it is worth pointing out that the tree has ambiguous meanings as a boundary of Bertha's spatiotemporal displacement. In the first moment, the strength of the pear tree lighted by the moon rays reinforces the completeness of the ecstasy of her feelings. Then, this magnitude acquires a precipice dimension, when it highlights the opposite pole, the rejection. Between Bertha's inner flame

and the pear tree in the garden, the narrative projects a poetic prose that questions the fugacity and continuity of momentary passions.

The extravagant impression that the illumination of the pear tree provokes in Bertha can be translated as the apex of the heterotopia. She rejects the company of the other people to dive into a moment that is hers only, beside her beloved woman. Isolated in her inner space, outer details start to be secondary and have their meanings emptied: the eccentric guests, the dishes served and the indifference of her husband. Thus, Bertha's psychological escape highlights how much the spaces overlap, projecting her in an inverted time, from a place outside of all places (FOUCAULT, 2015).

With the suggestion that the protagonist is out of all of the relationships, the story walks towards the fragmentation of her initial ecstasy. This delicate moment had already been anticipated by the selective omniscience, because there are hints that Bertha's passion was not being requited. Even so, the sensation will only be part of her space when, finally her suspicions are confirmed, when she sees the display of affection between her husband and her friend:

Harry with Miss Fulton's coat in his arms and Miss Fulton with her back turned to him and her head bent. He tossed the coat away, put his hands on her shoulders and turned her violently to him. His lips said: 'I adore you', and Miss Fulton laid her moonbeam fingers on his cheeks and smiled her sleepy smile. Harry's nostrils quivered; his lips curled back in a hideous grin while he whispered: 'Tomorrow', and with her eyelids Miss Fulton said: 'Yes' (MANSFIELD, 2011, p. 21).

Astonished, Bertha remained motionless in the room until Pearl said goodbye. With this discovery, her space starts to become smaller and she isolates herself at a corner of the house, "[...] in which we like to hide, or withdraw into ourselves, is a symbol of solitude for the imagination" (BACHELARD, 1994, p. 136). With the outcome of her passion, her state of ecstasy gradually makes room for reason and, little by little, turns to reality.

Before the new fact, she could do nothing but run over to the long windows of the garden and cried: "Oh, what is going to happen now?" (MANSFIELD, 2011, p. 22). With such a psychological displacement of the protagonist who is knocked off her feet, Mansfield concludes the story, kidnapping the woman of her previous state and stripping her socially. Bertha is then exposed to her inner search that goes from the euphoric state to the emptiness for the betrayal. The end leaves open which way she will follow.

Therefore, in the story, marks of Mansfield's modern model are identified from the appreciation of the poetic beauty of daydreaming, highlighting the surprise of the unpredictability of human attitudes and of the transitoriness of love. Such marks give the poetic tone of both the ecstasy and the abyss Bertha goes through in an internal but untimely manner.

With this spatiotemporal option, Mansfield exposes the briefness of platonic passions and the hypocrisy of bourgeois marriages, leaving a criticism about how much a personal reverie is an alienation process. By returning to the space of the living room, Bertha sets herself free from a sick psychological state, because in this process "[...] the day-dream of inhabiting is thwarted. A daydream of elsewhere should be left open therefore, at all times" (BACHELARD, 1994, p. 62).

Now, Bertha was delighted with a friend of her husband and had not realized the risks. In this case, the story presents a tragic perspective to Bertha, since this is a double betrayal: the physical one by her husband, and the platonic disappointment she was living. This collision between the times narrated are important so we observe how much *Bliss* goes beyond its historical moment by proposing a fragmented spatiotemporal model that is going to prevail in the British modernist fiction.

Final considerations

Thus, Mansfield's model of short story surpasses the 'atmosphere' classification to value a poetic narrative, since it condensates dramatic moments of the protagonist, in both reveries of her passion and the discovery of the betrayal. When exploring the betrayal scene as an inversion of the personal ecstasy, Mansfield reinforces the temporariness of the fugacious love and of the social relations. In this case, we can say that the originality of Mansfield's text, in relation to Tchekhov's short stories, emphasizes that "[...] if there is debt, it is from the previous text to that one that provokes its rediscovery" (CARVALHAL, 2010, p. 65)⁵.

In an eccentric and snobbish society, the author stresses that the inner river of feelings of her protagonist causes her to alienate. With this movement, she is abruptly pulled into the reality of ordinary living. The story highlights that the heterotopia, as a psychological space, is also marked by the erosion of what is idealized, because "[...] the space that claws and gnaws at us is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space" (FOUCAULT, 2015, p. 3).

⁵ This piece is a free translation "[...] se dividia há, é do texto anterior com aquele que provoca sua redescoberta" (CARVALHAL, 2010, p. 65).

The subtleties of the short story also exemplify the narrative model debated in the letters, diaries and criticisms left by Mansfield and Woolf. Both believed in the complexity of the intimist narrative that was capable of translating the spiritual conflicts of their characters. Bertha, for instance, after the ecstasy, faces her world falling apart. This poetic construction of the character – fragmented when she falls in love, astonished when betrayed – approximates to what Virginia Woolf defends as a modern human conception to literature. For her, life does not present itself as a series of lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a bright halo, a semitransparent mantle that encircles us since the beginning of perception until the end (WOOLF apud LEHMANN, 1989).

With this style of immersion into the human soul, Mansfield rejects the traditional model of respect to the external time of the characters and to the realist description of social customs, giving to Bertha's internal rhythm a poetic tone of the displacement of a woman in love that falls into a precipice when realizing the double emptiness caused by the relationship of her husband with her beloved woman.

Thus, *Bliss* presents a fictional model that enchants, for bringing some variables to its characters and for reinforcing that, although Bertha's inner world is the axis of the narrative, there are several simultaneous events around her. Throughout her journey, the character stays chained to aspirations and desires, refusing to see the intrigues that are part of her ordinary life: her daughter being educated by her nanny, her husband's deceit, and the eccentricity of her guests.

In this sense, the story affiliates to the renewal of the English modern literature when it incorporates the desire for aesthetic innovation that was in the air and was ambitioned by the artists of that time. Such process of literary construction suggests that the

[...] intertext takes into consideration the sociability of the literary writing, whose individuality is made concrete up to a certain point when previous writings cross each other (NITRINI, 2010, p. 165)⁶.

Thus, Mansfield spatiotemporal model brings an aesthetic matrix that will be largely explored by

writers of the 20th century. In the spatiotemporal perspective, she develops a fragmented style that highlights daydreaming as a poetic mark of the temporal displacement of her characters. In the spatial perspective, she reattaches the line of the narrative with the social one, through her criticisms to the decay of bourgeois behaviors. Such style is unmistakable and vigorous.

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⁶ This piece is a free translation "[...] intertexto leva em consideração a sociabilidade da escritura literária, cuja individualidade se realiza até certo ponto no cruzamento particular de escrituras prévias" (NITRINI, 2010, p. 165).