

THEMATIC SECTION:  
CULTURAL STUDIES

**Educação**  
& realidade

## **Environments Carved in Narratives of Childhood**

**Leandro Belinaso Guimarães<sup>1</sup>**  
**Heloísa Karam<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC), Florianópolis/SC – Brazil

**ABSTRACT – Environments Carved in Narratives of Childhood.** This article derives from a master's thesis in Education, inspired by Cultural Studies in its encounter with Environmental Education. It is focused on how childhood narratives teach us ways of living and relating to the environments that surround us. In the article, we discuss how affective objects of childhood trigger stories. The research was conducted through interviews with subjects who, as children, lived in a coastal city of the state of Santa Catarina, Brazil. Their speeches were recorded and turned into narratives, which sculpt environments at the very moment of their invention. Narratives spelled in written words and images, bringing to life the affective objects of childhood, telling a little about a time, a place.

**Keywords: Environmental Education. Cultural Studies. Narrative. Memory.**

**RESUMO – Ambientes Esculpidos em Narrativas de Infância.** O presente artigo deriva-se de uma dissertação de mestrado em Educação, inspirada nos Estudos Culturais em seu encontro com a Educação Ambiental, voltada a pensar sobre como narrativas de infância nos ensinam modos de viver e se relacionar com os ambientes que nos enredam. No artigo discutimos como objetos afetivos da infância disparam histórias. A pesquisa foi realizada através de entrevistas com sujeitos que, quando crianças, habitaram uma cidade litorânea de Santa Catarina. Suas falas foram gravadas e transformadas em narrativas, que esculpem ambientes no próprio momento de sua invenção. Narrativas grafadas em palavras escritas e em imagens, que tornam vivos os objetos afetivos da infância, contando um pouco sobre um tempo, um lugar.

**Palavras-chave: Educação Ambiental. Estudos Culturais. Narrativa. Memória.**

## Introduction

This article derives from a master's thesis in Education focused on discussing how childhood narratives teach us ways of living and relating to the environments that surround us. One of the aspects that we would like to highlight from the beginning, which is at stake in the text, is the broadening of the meaning attributed to the educational, which has expanded considerably with the introduction of Cultural Studies – theorizing field and inspiring practice of the article – on stage in education research in the 1990s. Such investigations have included at the heart of their attention, in addition to schools and notably educational institutions, numerous instances, practices and artifacts of culture. Although such consideration is not the property of Cultural Studies – as research on new social movements and popular education also broadened educational beyond school in the second half of the twentieth century – they put the artifacts of culture (toys, objects of personal consumption, films, advertising campaigns) under tension and attention, having been seen as implicated not only in the institution and sharing of meanings, but also in the invention of social identities and ways of living, that is, presenting a remarkably pedagogical dimension.

It is also worth mentioning that this article is a result of a relationship *between* Cultural Studies and Environmental Education. Therefore, we do not place our lenses on one, let alone on the other field, both multifaceted and too wide. As Fabiana Marcello (2012) told us, there is variation among relationships. Furthermore, following the researcher's arguments, it is not a matter of seeking a definition, even saying what it is to do Environmental Education from Cultural Studies or vice versa, but to compose something, to move a set of questions, because, as Marcello states (2012, p. 327), “[...] the relationship transforms the very set that organizes”. At this encounter between Environmental Education and Cultural Studies, both falter and move.

After this circumscription of the text to the fields of Cultural Studies and Environmental Education, in the next section we chose to keep the text in the singular first-person, as the researcher, the main author of the article, wrote in her thesis. Even though the co-author participated effectively and affectively in the writing of this essay, maintaining the singular first-person in the following section allows the readers to enter imaginatively into the research atmosphere, which is the stage of this text. It deals with how affective objects of childhood trigger narratives about ways of living and relating environmentally, narratives that sculpt environments at the very moment of their invention. They came alive from what the characters in these stories told us and through the research exercise that spelled them in written words and images.

Finally, regarding the title we gave to the essay: it was inspired by Hernán Rivera Letelier's book (2012), entitled *La contadora de películas*. In this delightful short novel, environments are carved full of harshness and beauty at the same time. The hardness of the deserted place where the history takes place blends with the delicacy of the presence of

a movie theater in the arid city. There is also an imbrication, in the narrative itself, between fiction and reality. Let's look briefly at this.

In the book we have the story of Fairy Docine, a stage name for a girl who lives with her four other brothers and her father – retired after being unable to move his legs due to an accident – in a poor town in the desert of Chile and built around mining. The fun of the city at a time when there was no TV (neither squares nor gardens, in the arid landscape sculpted by the author) was the cinema. With no resources for everyone in the family to see the movies, the father posed a challenge to the children: whoever best told them could watch them. The girl was the winner, and according to her, there were three reasons for this achievement: devouring comics, passionately accompanying radio soap operas and listening to her mother – who had abandoned them to pursue the dream of being a dancer in the big city – telling her bedtime romantic movie stories. Gradually, Fairy Docine not only creates a stage name, but also – when she (re)tells, (re)creates the movies for her father and siblings – staging them with costumes of her own making. Little by little people from the small town began to scramble for the modest seats in the family room to listen carefully to the storyteller.

There are many elements that gradually make the narrative even more delicious and full of events, including tragic ones. What strikes us as interesting is a speech by the storyteller character Fairy Docine herself, when she says: “[...] from watching and telling movies, I often shuffled them with reality. And it was hard for me to remember if something had been lived by me or if I saw it projected on the screen, or if I had dreamed. Because I was even confused between my own dreams and movie scenes” (Letelier, 2012, p. 57). We hope the next section of the article can be read and dreamed as if you, reader, were in a movie theater.

### **Affective Objects Invite to the Narrative**

If you were given the task of collecting objects, or if it were your task to select from your collection what to discard, what to throw away, in the face of such a diversity of materials, the many ways of having the same thing, what would lead you to choose or discard this or that object? A possible utility that would be embedded in it? Would you keep what had the greatest commercial value? Would you think about the rarity of the material? Now imagine that you have little interference from the human world, you know no virtues and customs – what would make you choose this or that object?

A robot receives this mission in the movie animation entitled *Wall.E* (2008): it stores, collects, separates, chooses objects considered important by it, that it feels as important – this is a possible choice too, to emphasize what one feels to be significant.

For a long time, I was interested in this movie, which shows the saga of a robot produced with the purpose of pressing and piling up the

trash present on planet Earth in order to make it livable. However, it seems that only him and time still maintain their functions. This character spends his days amid the seemingly monotonous task of piling up rubble. The film covers the issue of human overconsumption in their last days on Earth and highlights the consequences generated by this behavior. However, what strikes me would be the delicacy of this surviving robot. What keeps him *alive* in the face of chaos and what moves him?

This film production brings an idea of inventory of the world, under the choices of a programmed robot that, bypassing the rules, accumulates objects in a container, making it its refuge. The subtlety of the pieces it stores impresses us. As a curious child, it keeps utensils, indifferent to their usefulness, seeming to love little things: a cockroach friend, some comforting songs, and a set of objects selected by it, which made possible its constructions and notions of the world. Something that researchers Ribeiro et al. (2010, p. 5), also inspired by the film, claim to be a “[...] dynamic of recreation and reinterpretation of information, concepts and meanings”.

This character becomes interesting for the research I developed in my master’s thesis: a project that was interested in hearing and learning from the childhood narratives of residents and former residents of a coastal municipality of Santa Catarina state called Governador Celso Ramos. The way to trigger memories, images and stories of these subjects was to encourage them to search these memories for their affective objects. These objects acted as vehicles that trigger affections, memories and forgetfulness, motivating them to narrate and teach us about ways of life and ways of relating to the environment.

The research unfolded from the woven narratives of conversations with some narrator-characters of the city. They describe, from an affective object, some scenes of their childhood in great detail, giving us beautiful stories and images. At this point, generosity, beauty and subtlety came to my eyes in the act of showing oneself, not only through memories, but also through their intimate objects.

Maciel (2004), with the influence of the work of Arthur Bispo do Rosário (1911-1989) – a material produced with almost a thousand pieces and called by the author “[...] records of my passage on earth”, currently exposed at Museu Bispo do Rosário, in Colônia Juliano Moreira in Rio de Janeiro –, brings us two important questions about the way we deal with the memory of things and that fit here to think about using artifacts like memory chunks or memory triggers. At one point, the author talks about how the classification of things, using different taxonomies, encloses the objects, taking their history from them, “[...] so that its context is abolished in favor of the synchronic logic of the collection”. Thus, objects “[...] tend to become ends in themselves” (Maciel, 2004, p. 19). In a second point, the author reflects that when objects are subjectivized, in this case by the artist, they acquire other values, “gain a language”, they have “a place and a history” (Maciel, 2004, p. 19). In

this sense, what the research proposed was to know affective objects that were chosen to signify important moments of the characters' lives. Many of these objects may have been contoured as their stories reshape and move, amplify over time. Stories do not stop and thus, however seemingly fixed on a bookcase, chest or box, the eyes of the beholder are no longer the same, the hands that touch them no longer feel the texture the same way, and the memories these senses and so many others bring are weaved with other memories.

For this reason, there is so much encounter between the movie *Wall.E* and the aforementioned research, because besides being an exemplary collector, *Wall.E* builds its own world and gives meaning to the things it collects. Something that reminds children and therefore allows me to think about some childhood narratives I was told. This is because, like *Wall.E*, children have a willingness to build something out of their eyes on what they have access to. In these facts, I find reasons for my enchantment with this production. The sentimental little robot's gaze on things is delicate, as one gives in to what he/she sees.

With all this context, I ask again: What would you choose from this world if you had to store it in objects? What matters to you or represents your look at the world, about a place, a space, a city, a *space-time*? When prompted to think about their childhoods, some people soon threw open memories, sometimes with scarce objects, sometimes filled with them. Would that make them more or less surrounded by a place? What can objects say about us and our relationships? Maybe it is not the number of objects that matters, but what we do with them, what fits them. Something that Mia Couto (2005, p. 76) says *hearing* from the photographs and that here we can think for the objects: "We who hear the voices in the photo come into contact with those who, even inhabiting the world of the living, belong to the domain of absence". If we transfer this idea to the objects, we could go on to the absence of these materials, arriving at what is not physically there, but inhabit them in other ways, because they belong to other worlds: invisible, particular, instantaneous or generational – who knows.

Just think about what we would do with an old leaky cauldron, eroded by time and rust, which was forgotten among the woods in some corner (Figure 1). With an iron container that, after being rescued, has been entering the imagination of children who visit a place and know a little of its history. Why save it? The answer to this question is quite multiple and going through all the possible whys may be interesting to understand the links of these subjects with the space they inhabit.

**Figure 1 – An old leaky cauldron and an iron kettle, both kept by the interviewed couple**



Source: Personal Collection.

Searching for objects throughout the conversations developed in the research was a choice that, in a way, was also a gift. This is because the arrival of these materials and souvenirs to the work was powerful to open spaces and air it. But also, because in addition to becoming a vanishing point, it is something that has increasingly been of my interest; and I feel its aftermath in my education as an educator – now also observant and attentive to objects.

I point out that during the interviews, these artifacts were more than spoken. Their narrators gave them life and history: apparently inanimate materials offered existence, are protagonists of some narratives; to the living things, like plants, they turned them into magical balloons that could offer flight; in other cases, objects were inventive to the point of memory, but in great detail; and there were still others that seemed to be thrown by the words, without context, without explanation, merely reverberating what they found in each reader or listener.

The greengrocer Manuel carried a bunch of flowers among his vegetables. He would pick the prettiest and say, 'This is for the girl'. The girl looked at the flower, took her perfume, did not feel worthy of such wonder and put it in a glass before the Saint or took it to the teacher.

[...]

There was a time when boyfriends and girlfriends communicated through flowers: I don't know if they would always say beautiful things; but the words used were roses, carnations, dahlias and violets, a huge and colorful dictionary that was arranged in different ways, as poets do. We read in flowers as we do today through the alphabet. Perhaps with this poetic language people would understand each other better.

[...]

And somewhere in the world, a foggy lady with blond autumn-colored hair, settles over glistening satins, large

branches of dried leaves, light, simple wildflowers whose old colors are only guessed. She arranges these branches in large frames; immortalizes these springs in clear glass plates; and it is, indeed, as if writing with flowers, too, not the direct and urgent messages of the lovers of the past, but vague undated poems, only for some readers, these poems that speak of beauty, missing someone, joy, death, which each one brings with oneself, takes with oneself, and can even leave the world without reciting or writing [...]. (Cecília Meireles, 2012, p. 30).

It is in this sense that the objects approach the flowers of Cecília Meireles in the excerpts from the chronicle presented above. The writer tells us how flowers can function as words: used by girlfriends and boyfriends, by gentlemen who have chosen them carefully, or by ladies who mean – and say – through their pictures. It seems to make sense, then, to think that, like the writer's flowers, objects are also poems: they speak of love, of joy and of missing someone. But they speak without words in a language that reaches those who feel them and those who keep them.

We bring to this article (we return to writing in the plural first-person), therefore, some brief moments of conversations conducted, through research, with some subjects who lived their childhood in the city of Governador Celso Ramos and who opened their homes for a conversation with us. It was with these interviews that the investigation took place. It was the *storytelling* that allowed us to sculpt the environment that was being narrated, emphasizing the intensity of the objects in these stories.

We highlight the decision to keep the names of respondents. We understand that this was a way of respecting them, because we believe that the *information* they brought is richness of their lives and only value them, because they are being remembered and presented with affection, respect and ethics. By signing a Consent Form, they became aware of the academic work that would develop from their stories. Thus, we highlight that we recognize them as producers and authors of their memories.

The same care we had with people, we had with their speech. Therefore, the interviews were transcribed valuing the maintenance of the characteristics of the conversations. Over time, we are more encouraged to make small punctuation and word hits. Still, perhaps there is a certain strangeness in the reader, for at times there are no straight and objective ideas, as in a sentence formulated for writing. Therefore, it will be up to us to seek this transposition, searching in the typed words a mood of conversation, loose; finding in the commas, tenses of each speech; and in the ellipses, different times, which can be interpreted as silences or escapes of thought.

With these notions present, we present a brief speech by Professor Anilton, one of the characters of the research who, when telling about a book of his mother, illustrates a scene from his childhood environment and tells us about feelings without saying.



Anilton: But at home I still have it, right, Nete? That book of the late mother, with whom she prayed. That one is with me... And that is something that can be rescued, because the cart I don't have anymore...<sup>2</sup>

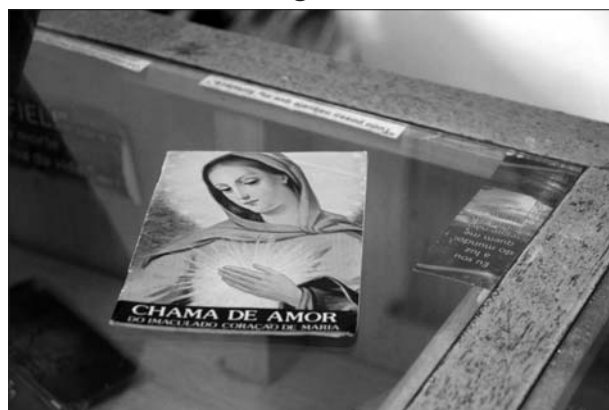
[...]

Nete: It's a book where she prayed through that book.

Heloísa (researcher): Did she always pray?

Anilton: She had a habit of praying ...

**Figure 2 – Prayer book of Mr. Anilton's mother, exposed and fixed on the glass desk**



Source: Personal Collection.

Arranged on bookshelves, on benches, in front of the bed or next to the saints that protect the house, they are visible to the eyes. Even the way they are displayed show how much their guarding relates to their willingness to show them, to see them daily, so that they do not forget what they keep<sup>3</sup>. An intention that, according to Ribeiro et al. (2010, p. 3), refers to the desire to “present the memory”, in a struggle “against the dispersion of things and forgetting”.

It is also worth considering the performance of the prayer book in Anilton's family (Figure 2). We may wonder about the functions that this apparent simple object has and that has repercussions on their lives. In his book *The System of Objects*, Jean Baudrillard (2007) provokes us to think about materials that lose their initial functions because they become affective. For the author, the possession “[...] is always that of an object *abstracted from its function and related to the individual*” (Baudrillard, 2007, p. 94, author's emphasis). In this sense, we only have what somehow goes through us.

These notions have helped us to think about the values this prayer book, for instance, might evoke by failing to serve something to represent, perhaps, a love, a longing, happy memories, or difficult feelings. But Baudrillard extends this idea by stating that these objects, abstracted from their use, take “[...] a strictly subjective status: they become objects of collection. They cease to be carpet, table, compass or bibelot to become *object*” (Baudrillard, 2007, p. 94).



**Figure 3 – Hand-embroidered pillowcases, kept by the couple**



Source: Personal collection.

**Figure 4 – Sewing machine that belonged to the mother of Mr. Vava, exposed over the small concrete wall on his porch**



Source: Personal collection.

With these words, we recall that the tables and the small concrete walls on the porch of Mr. Vava and Dona Benta, also interviewed, shelter objects that remind them of the memories that occupy the space in which they live (Figures 1, 3 and 4), the stories that precede them. Encouraged to talk about objects, we talked:

Vava: I have a cauldron...

Benta: There is an iron kettle there too.

Heloísa (researcher): But you saw [sic] your mother using it a lot?

Vava: Oh my God! Because we ate [sic] polenta and... only in that there. And this, since young, since very young. That cauldron I have there must have what? About 50 years or more.

Benta: Oh, more.

[...]

Vava: What we don't have is toy ... from childhood.  
Heloísa (researcher): No, but the object I say can be anything. One thing that you look at and remembers your childhood, you know?  
Vava: Oh, yes! This is what I say, this cauldron I remember that my mother made polenta for us [sic]. The kettle ... Take it, Benta, for us.  
[...]  
Vava: Then when the kids come here I tell them. About the same thing: the pestle too, coffee punching pestle...  
Heloísa (researcher): Oh. It's there ... yeah. And how long is this?  
Vava: It is still from our grandparents' time ...  
Heloísa (researcher): Really? But did you use it too?  
Vava: We used.  
[Benta is coming bringing a super heavy kettle and the cauldron]<sup>4</sup>  
Benta: This we already took to the workshop but could not weld.  
Vava: Mom made a lot of polenta right there...  
[...]  
Heloísa (researcher): My God, how heavy, have you thought full of water?  
Vava: Now you see ... [sic] They cooked polenta in it.  
Benta: Free-range chicken, everything. Then when the children come to do schoolwork, we show them.  
Heloísa (researcher): Yes, it's cool. And when you look [sic], do you remember [sic] a lot about your mother?  
Vava: Ah yes. Everything... In fact, today I live inside what was theirs, ... We all the time ... remember. Because whoever dies ... They say we forget, but we don't forget.  
Benta: Oh, I say it's a museum thing. Never mind, the kids want to do schoolwork with it...  
Vava: I have a corn threshing machine there that ... must be like that over 70 years, I think. I have there too.  
Heloísa (researcher): And of all these objects, do you think there is one that is really more your childhood?  
Vava: Ah, this one. [the cauldron]  
Benta: Both, right?  
Vava: Looks like I'm seeing my mom. When I was very young, she got a kettle out of it. She would say, 'Oh! Take care! Watch out for this kettle there!'  
[...]  
Benta: I still have the machine that was hers. Hand machine.  
[...]  
Vava: This is a machine arranged by hand. Sewing machine.  
Heloísa (researcher): Yes, yes, I know. What a beautiful thing.  
[The machine is also on the porch, on a small table, next to the bookcase.]  
[...]  
Vava: Yeah. There are people who don't like to keep old things, right. They say old thing place is in museum.  
[laughs]  
Benta: Oh! I have some embroidery of your mother too, do you wanna see? Your mother also embroidered [sic] a lot ...  
Vava: You have? Do you have there? Bring it for her to see...  
[...]  
Benta: Oh! She made the patches by hand. Poor her. Look what she used to do! The work it was! So many years ago this!  
[...]  
Vava: This is also our past. This is our past.

This excerpt advances beyond the others by bringing a context about this landscape that drenches us with sensations. How to talk about collections without presenting this conversation? “It is in the collection that this passionate venture of possession triumph is here that the daily prose of objects becomes poetry, unconscious and triumphant discourse.” (Baudrillard, 2007, p. 95). In this case, even without understanding each other as collectors, this gentleman and this lady act in such a role, because they are “[...] representatives and interlocutors to present the memory of a group and who fight against the dispersion of things and the forgetting of them” (Ribeiro et al., 2010, p. 6). A task worthy of respect and recognition demonstrated and rewarded by frequent student visits. Likewise, we can also link these ideas to the dolls that take up space on the shelves of Cristina and her daughter (Figure 5). Not being used to play, they *live* to grace the space, set for all to see. Thus, we realize that the dolls tell stories because they illuminate and bring out the desires of their childhood, which seem anchored in every dress, arms and legs that inhabit the shelves of the room.

Heloísa (researcher): Wasn't there anything special, or something that you remember [sic]?

Cristina: No. What marked, then, is that I did not have. What struck me when I had Jessica was the first toy I gave her: that baby, 'My Baby', that big one.

Heloísa (researcher): Oh, that big one.

C: Ah. I looked at the girls who had that ... Ah ... I was crazy about that.

Heloísa (researcher): And you didn't have dolls at the time?

C: I had. I had a doll, but it was that simple. That 'My Baby' no. That was hard for the child to have, right, at the time. So when I saw, and when I looked in the front window that doll. 'Oh! I wanted one of that!' So when I had Jessica, I thought ... when she was about six months old I bought her one ...

Heloísa (researcher): [laughs]. As if she was going to play...

C: She never cared about that doll. She never cared and I was ... I said to her, "Jessica is the doll of my dreams." It was the doll of my dreams, but she never ...

Heloísa (researcher): It was [sic] for you, right?

C: It was for me...

[laughs]

C: And the doll is still there today. Its ugly! I haven't cleaned her in a long time.

[...]

C: Who had a "My Baby" that would not drop her, right? I wouldn't leave for anything ... Then most of the girls got that doll, which was an imitation. That was a very thin plastic and came naked, only with a panty. Then most of them got one of that. Then I was crazy to have one of that. It cost me to get one.

Heloísa (researcher): But if you had one of that ... Then you made clothes...

C: Yes. Grandma made a lot of clothes. Then I got bigger and cut and made a lot of clothes ... My favorite game was playing doll ...

**Figure 5 – Dolls on Cristina's daughter's shelf**



Source: Personal collection.

The dolls, in this narrator's case, are objects that, at a given moment, appear as protagonists of the life stories told and, like the prayer book or the objects of the previous couple, they also seem to have another function today. However, it seems interesting to think about this story told by Cristina, causing us to deconstruct somehow a conception of object...

C: We played with everything, you know? On the weekend no one stayed home. Everyone joked. It was always like that... It was playing tag; you know? Boy and girl mixed, it wasn't just girls. It was a catch. From super friends. Then each one became a character ... And there was, over where my friend still lives, had a *pitanga* tree and below it had a ditch.

Heloísa (researcher): Oh, my God.

C: But this ditch was not ... active. It was right at the end of the downhill bank. We would go up there and play like the magic balloon.

Heloísa (researcher): Oh!

C: There was our balloon. [laughs]. That I do not forget, how funny, right?

Heloísa (researcher): And is [sic] there the *pitanga* tree?

C: No. No, because they built it upstairs...

Heloísa (researcher): Oh!

C: But I look at that tree ... I look at a *pitanga* tree and I remember what we used to do. And her older sister cleaned it up there. Then we would shake our feet, the leaves would fall ... My God, she spoke such a bad word, cursed so much ...

Heloísa (researcher): Oh, why did I have to take off the leaves?

C: Because she had to remove the falling leaves, right. We couldn't even step on the sand when it swept so as not to stamp with our foot.

Heloísa (researcher): Was it someone's house there?

C: It was their house. She had a lot of brothers. And the older one was a cleaning fanatic. They would take sand from the beach and put it in the yard ... Then she would sweep it to look very cute, very smooth. If we stepped, made our footprints; it made a ditch and she didn't like it [laughs]

As we had stated earlier, in child raising we do not differentiate objects from plants; imagination can do everything and allows concepts to be put aside, giving way to creations and affectivities. From a tree that becomes an object of memory, allowing environments to be carved, we go to a section chosen from so many that could not be absent from this text due to all the emotional charge that this object triggers. So, here is the moment when we know this artifact in the hands of the interviewee (Figures 6 e 7), Maria Santana. We also talked to her mother, present at the time of the conversation:

Heloísa (researcher): You told me that there was an object that reminded you a lot of childhood ...

Santana: Ah, I'll get you to see [sic].

Heloísa (researcher): Oh, get it for me ...  
[silence]

Heloísa (researcher): Oh, what a beautiful thing! Is it varnished?! ...

S.: The mother varnished now, but it was in regular straw.

Heloísa (researcher): Oh, was it? What a beautiful work, right?

S.: And it's many years old, right, Heló.

Heloísa (researcher): Was it from your great-grandmother?

S.: It was from my great-grandmother. And when she passed away, they started giving her things. And as she was very fond of me, they gave me this little seat that was something she had been caring for years. That's it ... My God! She died at 89, right, mom? And that had been around for years. How old has this seat been?

Heloísa (researcher): Imagine...

S.: Then there was a little doll. But at the time I had a cousin who was a baby and came here and broke the doll. So, I put it here, which looks like my little dog.

[laughs]

Heloísa (researcher): So, it has a great sentimental value. But do you remember that when you were a child? This little seat?

S.: Yes ... Of course, my God!

Mother: She wouldn't leave her grandmother's side.

S.: It's because I lived at my grandmother's house. And so ... I took care of her. My God ... And with her little doll, which my grandmother had given me along. Imagine, she's as valuable as what the little doll had.

Heloísa (researcher): And what was this little doll like?

S.: Oh, it was a normal little doll. In fact, it didn't even have hair. It was bald, like those little plastic babies, but very 'tiny'. Same size, proportional to the chair.

[...]

Heloísa (researcher): And you played [sic] with the doll?

S.: Yes. A tiny little thing like that. But kids, you know...

Heloísa (researcher): Yeah. Imagine...

S.: And when my grandmother ... when my great-grandmother started to get sick, she stayed more at my grandmother's house. But until then, while she could walk, we would go to her little house ... That was ... wow, pretty simple. Those little houses that had no window or glass window. They were made of wood. It was the little wooden window that divided the two pieces.

Heloísa (researcher): Oh, really?

Mother: Then it opened the window and it was the door of the house. Then I went out into the street and opened the door too.

Heloísa (researcher): Oh, I know.

Mother: Then when it arrived in the morning, we opened one.

S.: And it was like a window, like this...

Heloísa (researcher): Very cool.

S.: Wow! This here [the little seat] marked me a lot, a lot. And another thing is that like me ... I even commented to you: That there was a time when we didn't have a doll. I really couldn't afford it. So my toy, ... there was a phase that was: I rolled a rug ... I don't know if Mom remembers that: I rolled a kitchen rug and made a doll. [Showing the joke using her arms]

Heloísa (researcher): Ah! And you kept joking ...

**Figure 6 – The object that triggers memories living in the shelf**



Source: Personal collection.

**Figure 7 – Chair being presented at the time of the interview**



Source: Personal collection.

The objects trigger memories and with them, especially in the latter case, we can reach life stories of very affectionate and intimate relationships of her and her child inside. Likewise, the chosen object seems to be given such importance because of its “life span”: “How many years ago?”, says Maria. Thus, it is given a value of antiquity, because, for Baudrillard (2007), these objects are part of a marginal category, as they are unique, responding to an order that triggers the testimony, the memory and the nostalgia. For all the affective and emotional charge that her chair throws at her, it has been taken care of, maintained, kept.

It is possible to realize beyond the points already highlighted that the objects bring interesting and powerful scenes by relating these *former children* to the environment and their intense ways of relating with Governador Celso Ramos, because it is through imagination and invented games that they understand, feel and interact with the other beings of the place. It is Benjamin (2002, p. 92) who says: “[...] no one is more chaste about materials than children: a simple piece of wood, a pine cone or a pebble gather in the solidity, in the monolithism of their matter, an exuberance of the most different figures”.

During many conversations, toys offer a rich material to think about the depth of these characters’ connections with their childhood environments. This is a question that comes up at so many times from different subjects. That is why I give you part of my conversation with teacher Cristina:

Heloísa (researcher): There is a question that I realized was worth asking first: which is this relationship of the object that I told you by phone? Did you have anything in your childhood, any object that was special, that marked your life, your childhood? Something you remember that makes you come up with a lot of memories?

[silence]

C: Hmm, no...

Heloísa (researcher): No?

C: Because so, look. I was very young, I liked dolls, teddy bears, I got a lot of clay pieces. But I gave everything, right? I didn’t save anything.

Heloísa (researcher): I see. But not that it stayed, you know, little sister? But some object that suddenly stayed in your memory, you understand? No need to show me it ...

C: The question was ... the toys, right ... Because I was never that tricky girl to jump and be alone in the street. I was quieter. Just played. I played a lot like that ... doll, small dishes. Everything to me became small dishes ... everything.

Heloísa (researcher): Imagine.

C: Even a small cup of yogurt for me turned into a little pan ...

[laughs]

In this conversation with Cristina, at first it is the absence of an object that strikes our eyes, but we highlight that it is the remains that come to life and become other things, consisting of a power of being more, perhaps commonly not being anything else: former pots that have become toys.



### Some Brief Conclusive Lines

The relationships we have established with objects have changed in the last decades. We are facing a saturation of objects that often hinders the imagination. However, in Cristina's speech about the yogurt pots that turned into pans, or Maria Santana's speech about the dolls invented with carpet, we perceive the marks of artifacts that, having been created and produced, seem to receive a special place as memory.

Usually what we do is to interpret as adults in our own way what the child wants. We feel inebriated by the effort to encourage others to perceive and promote an exercise in abstracting and letting each child or adult produce their toys, their games, their stories, their tales and fables. Just as we think they can produce their narratives by inventing ways of inhabiting an environment, we also understand that the very notion of environment itself is not limited to a set of abiotic and biotic factors<sup>5</sup>, thus extending this notion to the intense interrelationships of subjects and their affectivities, drawing these environments beyond mere survival. In this sense, our importance launches us to question the practices and actions that always face us with the same answers and that point little way to an encounter of each of us with something that seems closer, more affective, more intimate.

Perhaps in this case the imagination is an opening, a possible path to the construction of what we wish to understand as *spacetime*, space-dream, space-desire. Kieran Egan (2007) brings us the notion that, as we imagine, we are promoting and creating possibilities to relate to the world, to people, to the values imposed on us. Perhaps here is an alternative to producing something in the field of fiction so that later, or even simultaneously, these notions can enter deeper into the porous and permeable field of everyday life. How to separate ways of feeling and producing a space from ways of living it? We produce in imagination what we wish to live. According to Egan (2007), "[...] imagination finds itself at the crucial point where perception, memory, idea generation, emotion, metaphor and undoubtedly other aspects of our lives intersect and interact". Therefore, we are faced with the importance of offering ourselves and those who sometimes pass momentarily through our lives, the freedom for them to create, produce their inventions, whatever they may be, so that we may come across what is intensive in our lives.

Fiction, which for many could be understood as fun and not a proposal for Environmental Education, can therefore be seen as a way of promoting potential exchanges between individuals and their relationships. We can, from what we tell, from the images we produce by narrating, rethink our lives beyond what we are given. And why not think of another world? Thus, we could "[...] glimpse possibilities in and beyond the realities in which we are immersed" (Egan, 2007).

To close the article, we use some of the disturbing words of the character Estamira in the Brazilian documentary movie that bears her name, which always resonate here when we embrace the importance of creation. Estamira says, with all her disbelief in this world of realities

and truths: “Everything that is imaginary exists, is and has” (Estamira, 2005)<sup>6</sup>.

Translated by Sabrina Mendonça Ferreira and proofread by Ananyr Porto Fajardo

Received on December 26, 2018

Approved on June 3, 2019

## Notes

- 1 We spell this way in line with Nilda Alves (2000).
- 2 He refers to a little cart, a gift from his father, which is presented in the full interview.
- 3 Remembering the words and meaning used by Antonio Cicero in his poem *Guardar* (Cícero, 1996).
- 4 Inside the brackets are some interventions that deemed necessary at the time of transcription.
- 5 Concept studied in Ecology, in which an environment is formed by biotic (living beings) and abiotic (chemical and physical aspects that characterize it, such as light, temperature and wind, for instance) components.
- 6 This article is part of the Thematic Section, *Cultural Studies*, organized by Maria Lúcia Castagna Wortmann (Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul), Luís Henrique Sacchi dos Santos (Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul), Iara Tatiana Bonin (Universidade Luterana do Brasil) and Daniela Ripoll (Universidade Luterana do Brasil).

## References

- ALVES, Nilda. Espaço e Tempo de Ensinar e Aprender. In: CANDAU, Vera (Org.). **Linguagens, Espaços, Tempos no Ensinar e Aprender**. Rio de Janeiro: DP&A, 2000. P. 21-33.
- BAUDRILLARD, Jean. **O Sistema dos Objetos**. Tradução de Zulmira Ribeiro Tavares. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 2007.
- BENJAMIN, Walter. **Reflexões Sobre a Criança, o Brinquedo e a Educação**. São Paulo: Editora 34, 2002.
- CÍCERO, Antônio. **Guardar: poemas escolhidos**. Rio de Janeiro: Record, 1996.
- COUTO, Mia. As Vozes da Foto. In: COUTO, Mia (Org.). **Pensatempos: textos de opinião**. Lisboa: Editorial Caminho Nosso Mundo, 2005.
- EGAN, Kieran. Por que a Imaginação é Importante na Educação? In: FRITZEN, Celdon et al. (Org.). **Infância: imaginação e educação em debate**. Campinas: Papirus, 2007.
- ESTAMIRA. Direção: Marcos Prado, 2005. 1 DVD (121 min.).
- LETELIER, Hernán Rivera. **A Contadora de Filmes**. Tradução de Eric Nepomuceno. São Paulo: Cosac Naify, 2012.
- MACIEL, Maria Esther. **A Memória das Coisas: ensaios de literatura, cinema e artes plásticas**. Rio de Janeiro: Lamparina Editora, 2004.

MARCELLO, Fabiana de Amorim. O efeito cinema na educação. In: SARAIVA, Karla; MARCELLO, Fabiana de Amorim (Org.). **Estudos Culturais e Educação: desafios atuais**. Canoas: Editora da ULBRA, 2012.

MEIRELES, Cecília. **Cecília Meireles: crônicas para jovens**. São Paulo: Global, 2012.

RIBEIRO, Leila Beatriz; MACIEL, Fabio Osmar de Oliveira; COSTA, Silvia Ramos Gomes. Coleção e Memória: A trajetória dos objetos a partir da análise filmica. In: CONGRESSO BRASILEIRO DE CIÊNCIAS DA COMUNICAÇÃO. **Anais...** Intercom, 2010.

WALL-E. Direção: Andrew Stanton. EUA: Pixar Animation Studios, 2008. 1 DVD (98 min.).

**Leandro Belinaso Guimarães** is a professor at Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC).

ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3275-7238>

E-mail: [lebelinaso@gmail.com](mailto:lebelinaso@gmail.com)

**Heloísa da Silva Karam** is a biologist and holds a master's in education from Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC).

ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6389-8637>

E-mail: [heloisakaram@yahoo.com.br](mailto:heloisakaram@yahoo.com.br)

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 International. Available at: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>.