Little Red Riding Hood and the (In)Significant Children's Drawings

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Abstract: *Little Red Riding Hood has a special place in the classic tales. A tale without fairy, but still stirs the imagination of children and adults worldwide. In this work, we tried to look for Red Riding Hood's image in different products, specially, in the drawings produced by children on the Education Center of Tiradentes University. We question the (in) significance of drawings, children's productions and this proliferation of Little Red Hoods around the world, investigating the importance of children's drawing. This work's objective is to discuss about children's drawings, their (in) significant and "pseudo-narratives" as possibilities for the expansion of the original classic narrative by cultural subjects, as potency for Visual Education.*

Keywords: Visual Education, Children's drawings, Red Riding Hood's, Pedagogy and Practice.

1. The Little Red Riding Hood narrative and its ramifications

Little Red Hood!

Perhaps the Red Hood is one of the most read and seen character in many different products. Besides book illustrations, cartoons, children's theaters, music CDs, Little Red Riding Hood also appears on t-shirts, as "garden gnomes"; as matrioskas; among many other things.

Image 2 – T-shirt: cultural product

Image 1: Garden gnomes, common figures in gardens of Brazilian homes.

Is Little Red Riding Hood with a dwarf or has Snow White decided to play Little Red Riding Hood? And what is this flamingo doing with those two? Why are they tied?

How many questions can we make with these (in)significant images? No -meaning? (In) significant are also these questions, perhaps this text, but that leads us to talk about this? Out-significant?

This text sought to question the frequent images we see in the various media of mass communication, in daily and drawings made by children in order to think this proliferation of

images of classic tales that are applied nowadays and that collaborate to their stay in our lives. We are terming these images as “in-significant” because they have no claim to the artwork, illustration, or anything else deemed “important,” are just the products of mass culture, designed the decor or for personal use and, children's drawings used here, although they are part of a larger project, are considered worthless for many, their destination is the trash.

However, our hypothesis is that there is something powerful in these (in)significant things. Something that requires another kind of relationship from us, different from some policies that seek reflection, critique, transformation from “serious” themes, themes of a certain type of human need. Deep, essential, fundamental. The smallest things, the details, the cracks, the fragments, the plant that grows in a cracking on the wall, these are (in) significant for most people.

When we are looking for these, we think about the powers not only of the (in) significant things, but, also, the powers of the false, which, according to Deleuze (2007) “exists only under the aspect of series of powers, which are always referring and penetrating each other” (p. 164). A chain of Little Red Riding Hood in tees, sculptures in gardens, dolls, graphics, films, in Taboquinhas photographs and in children's drawings of the Unit Education Center.

Image 3 - Reinterpretation of matryoshkas with the characters of Little Red Riding Hood.

Image 4 - Photo taken in Taboquinhas. Image 5 - Drawing produced by one of the children from Unit Education Center. Both images are from Giovana Scareli's acquis.

Visualities that make us a question: what is the value, the importance of children's drawing? What do parents and teachers do about the huge amount of drawings made by children? I am not arguing here that ALL drawings are to be saved for posterity, but I propose to think about what children imply? What are they expressing? How they (re)create Little Red Riding Hood and wolves and mothers and grandmothers and forests and other characters who, perchance, “invade” the drawing? The simplicity, the (in)experience makes the drawing set to become a “pseudo-narrative”.

> The narrative no longer refers to an ideal of truth to be its truth, but becomes a “pseudo-narrative”, a poem, a narrative that simulates or rather a simulation of the narrative. Objective and subjective images lose their distinction, but also their identity, in favor of a new circuit where are replaced in blocks, or contaminate, or decompose and recompose (Deleuze, 2007, p. 181).

Children create other stories, inventing Little Red Riding Hood and wolves and scenarios and characters that are not seen by almost anyone. Sketches almost (in)visible on a sheet of white A4 paper.

Images 6, 7, and 8 - Drawings produced by children from Unit Education Center. Images are from Giovana Scareli's acquis.

A wolf with a silly face in granny's bed, could be a (in)significant drawing, however, the graphical representation of the wolf and the angle chosen for this representation are very interesting. The child sees a naive wolf, almost a kitten, looking from the top, as if she were looking at things from above the ceiling. In another drawing, we see a Red Riding Hood all in red who finds a wolf (who also looks silly) in the forest with a tree full of red berries. The scene is very present in illustrations of this tale. Almost always this moment is represented. But we cannot miss the heart above the wolf's head, symbol of love, passion... A Wolf in love for Riding Hood. The last of this small series shows Hood saying goodbye to her mother with the wolf hidden. In another common episode, several moments are condensed in the drawing: the farewell scene between the daughter and the mother, the wolf in the forest, and Grandma's house. But the most interesting is how the child was able to show the distant Grandma's house in an attempt of perspective.

2. The ways of this work, or "by the street outside, I'm going so lonely"...

This text is one of the productions made from a larger project titled "The research with images in the educational field: visual education, cultural production and child production" developed by Professor Giovana Scareli, initially by the Graduate Program - Master of Education of Tiradentes University (Unit) and later by the Program Graduate - Master of Education of Federal University of São João del-Rei (UFSJ). From this large project, other projects were derived from both research as extension, with or without funding.

For performing all these steps of this research served us theoretical support authors who have researched and / or researching the cultural production, graphics, childish drawing, tales, having a multi-referential character involving the areas of Art Education, Psychology, Psychoanalysis, Education and Philosophy basically. These different areas offered in able to analyze and interpret the drawings produced by children and, from that production, thinking the images as evidence pointing to ways of research, which are full of meaning and should be more valued by the school.

For the production of drawings, was created an Extension Project, connected with the research project, entitled “Workshops to read and think”. We have partnered with the Center for Education of the Tiradentes University - Unit. The drawings were produced by the children of this Nucleus in the second half of 2012. There were six meetings with each of the initial grades of elementary school (1st to 4th grade). In classes 1st and 2nd grade we opted fairy tales and the 3rd and 4th grade we opted fables and mythological texts. The productions were made at the end of the meeting and had the following systematic: we organized the class in a circle, the children came and after some initial conversations, Professor Giovana Scareli, read one of the stories selected for that meeting. After reading, was provoked a conversation about history and about some of the thinking skills because our work was an adaptation of the method developed by Mathew Lipman, philosophy for children. After this discussion, we asked children to do a drawing about the story, or about the conversation, or even about what they wanted to draw on that meeting. The drawings were collected and subjected to scan these to obtain a digital file. These graphic materials are all scanned and it's part of the database that we worked in the analysis.

The analysis of graphic productions were made by an adaptation of the documentary method of Ralf Bohnsack (2010) and occurred initially, as follows: after watching the production, chose some stories, whose drawings appeared in the analysis with potential for greater.

While the photo that we used (Image 4), is part of a workshop held with a group of children in 2012 in the district of Taboquinhas, Itacaré / BA (Brazil). The workshop was to tell the story of Little Red Riding Hood and invent, (re)create these characters and scenarios in this district with the help of cameras.

For this article, we use the images they had more dialogue with the theme and chosen for the theoretical, Gilles Deleuze dialogue. Therefore, the choices were for convenience and theoretical predictions are from the field of philosophy, psychology and art education.

3. Powers of Child Drawing

Childlike drawings are ways of self-expression for children, an expressive form that has its vocabulary, a type of visual. The delight of the gesture associates with the pleasure of registration, the satisfaction of leaving their mark, and results in the act of drawing.

> Drawing is registering the playful, artistic or scientific means of lines, dots and spots. Hence the design is an efficient means of communication as it expresses ideas graphically. Individuals from different backgrounds and social values in the design have an indispensable and important tool for communication (Derdyk 1994, p. 239).

Derdyk (1994) talks about the communicative potential of design, in addition to the significant, the child draws to communicate with someone, with their selves, with the world. But this author also states that the act of drawing propels other events that occur together in an indissoluble activity, providing a great walk through the yard of the imaginary. Indeed, the design is an expression of the worldview that each child possesses, because through it the child develops their potential expressing their thoughts.

But these graphic productions, often end up having a need for representation, something figurative, which approximates to the real world and happens according Mèredieu (1991), because the child tries to imitate people, events and things around them. This finding,

the influence of the environment on the child and its design also proved the “myth of spontaneity” and explicitly shows the influence of the environment on the child.

Adults have some responsibility for this as they interfere a lot in child development, suggesting, giving examples, and insistently they asking “what's that?” “You're drawing what?” And these questions by adults, according Mèredieu (1991) “is equivalent to that same attitude of trying to understand at any price” (p. 17) which means “an abstract fabric” (p. 17)

Sans (1995) tells us that

> [...] The child who live their childhood with respect, understanding and creativity will be closer to being an adult with vision can overcome social bigotry of his time, providing conditions not met for human coexistence happen more dignity. And that hope is fostered is necessary to live according to the principles of his playful nature child not being suffocated by the pace of wills adult. (p. 24)

These “influences” or “interference” really happen in schools, especially with kids who start too early, when their school life and the school is more concerned with the “transmission” of content. With time, the child will lose its playfulness and opportunities for expression in different languages, because the important thing is to prepare early for college entrance, ESMS, labor market etc... Adults, especially education professionals and parents are, mostly, depriving children of their own language, their way of authentic expression. “The loss of playfulness in children causes premature aging and atrophy spontaneity” (Sans, 1995, p. 22).

Images 9 and 10 - Drawings produced by children from Unit Education Center. Images are from Giovana Scareli's acquis.

In both drawings, which show the same scene, there is something playful: an open eyed wolf, arms up, “blond hair” and wearing shorts, stops in front of the Red Riding Hood (wanting to scare her?). Beside, a wolf without color extends his arms toward Hood with angry face, also dressed entirely in red. What is funny in this scene is the wolf looking at us, readers/viewers, as well as Riding Hood (a theater, they enact the scene?) Suddenly, fear staged of a wolf that everyone already knows, turns into laughter, in something hilarious. To Moreira (2005) “The possibility of drawing as play, drawing as able to speak, marks the development of children” (p. 26) A Pure drawing joke that breaks with the most common representations and resists explanations of the world.

A child's drawing is an overall activity, comprising a set of their capabilities and needs. When drawing, the child expresses the way they feel. The development of creative potential in children, whatever the type of activity which it is expressed, is essential to its innate growth cycle. Similarly, the conditions for their full growth (emotional, psychological, physical, cognitive) cannot be static.

> The scrawl is not simply a sensory-motor activity, uncompromising and unintelligible. Behind this apparent “uselessness” contained in the act of doodling are latent in existential secrets, emotional confidences, communication needs (Derdyk 2010, p. 50).

The (un) usefulness of drawing and (in)significance of children's drawings are part of everyday life of the child. Cleft of work, of the content, of the studies in order to draw with pleasure, with the playfulness of picking up a pencil and doodle something on the wall, on the table, on the bathroom door. Infant transgressions that abandoned little by little to become future becoming, as when a quick gesture, a smile or when we paint the tooth of a person in a picture of a magazine.

> The child scribbles the pleasure of scribbling, gesturing, of asserting. The design that arises is a engine, organic, biological, rhythmic. When you slide the pencil on the paper, the lines appear. When the hand stops, the lines do not appear. Appear, disappear. The permanence of the line on the paper is invested with magic and it stimulates the wish to prolong this pleasure, which means an intense, invaluable inner activity for us adults. It is a self-generated pleasure and warmth. The authorship of magic depends exclusively on the child (Derdyk 2010, p. 52).

Images 10 and 11 - Drawings produced by children from Unit Education Center. Images are from Giovana Scareli's acquis.

Children scribble, have a thousand ideas to draw, but not always their hands know how to put on paper the thought, then they scratch, erase, do it again and again until they leave it as it is, or until knead the sheet and start all over again. It is a mixture of desire and frustration that the child experiences when drawing.

The experiences of workshops with children aged six to ten years old makes clear that the children are observers; they examine the situations and retain information very easily. When they draw, they select some aspect of their lives that they see as important history.

Final considerations

The main hypothesis of this text was to discuss that there is something potent in the (in) significance things. Something that requires us other relationship, other than proposing policies that seek reflection, critique, transformation from “serious”, expensive, themes of a particular type of human need. Drawing builds an overall activity, in which the child expresses the way they feel existence. Whatever the type of activity in which it is expressed, the development of creative potential in children is essential to their innate growth cycle. Children's drawings remind us about visualities that make us question the importance of children's drawing and also suggest us to think about what children inscribe, what they express and how they (re) create the characters. The potential is to glimpse the apparent (un) use of the tales, the (in) significance of childish things, creative reproducibility of Red Riding Hoods and wolves. We invent and (re) invent this story and replicated its characters in narratives contaminated with infant experiences, stories of classic tales and interference of various orders.

The (in)significance that many adults give to children's drawings, demonstrates the ignorance around this expressive mode. It's not necessary to psychologize the drawings, or our relationships, much less children. But to create moments for creation, creations talk about these actions are important because through drawing children are organizing their knowledge, their understanding of the world and of herself, establishing a relationship with each other and / or with the world and / or herself through these works (in) significant.

What we seek with designs chosen to be part of this text is to present the various types of drawing on the same story. Infant graphical expressions that were made from engagement with the story, with the materials they had available and the skill that each had, according to their ages. We seek to show undergraduate students and teachers, in that seemingly insignificant things can be powers of thought and creation.

Images 12 and 13 - Drawings produced by children from Unit Education Center. Images are from Giovana Scareli's acquis.

Thousands of Little Red Riding Hoods (of all kinds, even a transvestite Riding Hood?) leave every day from their mothers homes, meet the wolves halfway, then meet them again at Grandma's house and other numerous outcomes happen: with the hunter, with the Lumberjack, without other characters ... Little Red Riding Hood from Taboquinhas, Aracaju, the Brothers Grimm's, Charles Perrault's... In the (un) apparent use of the tales, in the (un)

significance of childish things, in the creative reproducibility of Little Red Riding Hood and the wolf around the world, we invent and (re) invent this story and its characters. It's the power of the false in replicating wolves and Little Red Riding Hood. Narratives are full with childhood experiences, the stories of classic tales and specially plain of their (mis) understandings of the world. What we see in these works is all this and many other things... interference from different orders to produce (in) significant meanings in everyday worlds.

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