

Pinwheel House. A clinical and political strategy in childhood attention.

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What we are going to present here is the experience of a project born from a partnership between the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul (Institute of Psychology) And APPOA Institute (Psychoanalytic Association of Porto Alegre's Institute): the Pinwheel House. A Dolto structure, a place to play, talk and tell stories. A place that welcomes the common life, a psychoanalysis in the city. We are in an area of Porto Alegre which is near the city center, of two Universities (UFRGS and PUCRS) and in front of a shopping center, but almost no one sees. It is called Villa São Pedro, name derived from the proximity to the São Pedro Psychiatric Hospital. Its residents live in extreme socioeconomic insecurity and live with the exclusion of all rights and resources to which only those designated "citizens" have access. They live from picking and selling waste which overflows small shacks, mingling with its residents. The shacks have no floor, the sewer is the open, flies and stench are constant.

The community is subjected to many forms of violence: the social abandonment, the parallel and perverse power of drug traffic, police action that imposes arbitrary and inhumanly to adults and children. In this harsh environment, its residents find as a way of resolving their conflicts, whichever they might be, repetitions of these experiences, more violence. They are territories, "potentially traumatic" spaces by the absence and deregulation of protective resources to its inhabitants, as says Paulo Endo¹ (2005, p. 225). There they not only are more exposed than residents of other parts of the city, but also have to always be alert, and often anguished, facing violence that can erupt unexpectedly at any time, traumatically.

The always present violence, ends up permeating all relationships and being reproduced in relations between the children themselves and the House.

We know, as Benilton Bezerra warns, "that initiatives like our project has its limits within the complexity of structural problems that must be addressed so that the subjects who inhabit these spaces get out of exclusion in which they find themselves and share more widely the resources (social, economic, political and cultural) necessary for the expansion of its social norms and their full citizenship."² We are not unaware of the risks, initiatives like ours, of psychologizing, or incorporating a "competent discourse", technical, issues and problems that are existential, political or

¹ENDO, Paulo Cesar. "Violence in the heart of the city". São Paulo, Escuta, 2005

socio-economic. But these issues do not prevent us from wanting, with our proposed work, to create a device which children and adults can use to enlarge their chances to live more autonomously, creative and satisfactory as possible. In this project there is the junction of clinical and political effects without this being a flag of the House.

The work we do is situated at the edges of clinical, social and educational intervention without properly being about any of them, but certainly based by psychoanalysis. This is not an educational intervention itself, though it could be present, since we consider that care have a guiding and indicative function, that is, it may have a value of membership and a role in the mental health of little ones. It is also not about a social work intervention, despite the bet made on the effects that the production of more autonomous individuals, less conformed and silenced by pain, desiring, in short, may have in taking responsibility in social life.

It is not the application of a method, but the building of a space where it's possible to play and talk, symbolizing children's resources and development.

The House is a clinical device with a particular temporality, which Bezerra reiterates as being test, trial, reinvention, renewal of listening and looking place.

Françoise Dolto thought the Maison Verte as a transitional space between the family and the school. We think the Pinwheel House like that, but also as a place that promotes the shifting of violence into words, where a violent Other, lawless, can lead to another version of the Other, social, supported by the on-duty workers. In this perspective, Bezerra affirms that "every clinic is social and every policy concerns the subjective life of each individual. The singularity can only arise and be experienced in the relation field with the other subjects, field their social relations. These, in turn, only gain meaning, only reproduce or modify the apprehension that the subjects make of them".³

We know that the clinical symptoms is built at the intersection of how the subject solves his ghost with the social discourse. The symptom is certainly singular, but it is not individual. Singular because it's about the way one equates this combination, but the symptom is at the same time collective time and individual. Or, in the words of Lacan: "The sufferings of neurosis and psychosis are for us, the school of passions of soul, as well as the faithful of psychoanalytic scale, when calculating the slope of its threat in entire communities, it gives us the damping rate of the passions of the polis." (P.103)

We also propose a reflection on the dimension of a temporality that introduces the possibility of inclusion and recognition through a clinical and political act of bet/assumption of the existence of a desiring subject, of a narrator. A place where you

²BEZERRA JR, Benilton . Preface: "Weaving the network." In Weaving the network: mental health trajectories in Sao Paulo. S. Paulo: Cabral Universitária, p. 18, 1999.

³*ibid.*, p. 18.

can also think the concept of witness. We have noticed how the space/time of the work shifts unfold a timing dimension that allows someone to want to be there, be included, by playing and by the word and, if possible, elaborate traumas.

Benjamin, notices that the survivors, in World War II, returned dumb from trenches because what they experienced could not be assimilated by words. In "The Storyteller" he outlines the idea of an narration in the narrative ruins, a transmission between pieces of a tradition in crumbs. To Gagnebin, this proposition is born of an ethical and political injunction, "not to let the past be forgotten. This narrator would be the figure of the rag-picker, the collector of junk and garbage, this character of the great modern cities collecting pieces, rests, debris, driven by poverty, certainly, but also by the desire to not let anything get lost"⁴. This scrapper narrator has targeted to collect great things. It must catch all that is left as something that has no meaning. What are these leftover elements of historical discourse? Benjamin's answer is twofold: first the suffering in untellable; second, that which has no name, the anonymous, that which leaves no trace.

Are we, the on-duty workers, also narrators, collecting the pieces, the debris, the garbage so that nothing gets lost from this violence and exclusion? We work in this community for nearly 4 years. We learn, with time, to contextualize some children's games, or even their absence. In the middle of the second semester of 2013, we experienced two emblematic afternoons.

In one, no game was created. All toys were being spread through the courtyard and destroyed with much violence. Interventions had no effect. A 3-year-old spent the afternoon burying dolls oblivious to the patio chaos. All employees of the House that approached him could not produce any sliding in what was repeated to exhaustion. Near the end, a worker approaches with a truck and proposes him a new game: to carry load of earth to his cousin's house who played a little distant. He accepts it and can thus leave the endless and anguishing funeral. It's important to say that many of our interventions with young children happens without a caregiver adult, as they are brought to the house by their slightly older brothers. The story of the children and the territory itself are constructed afterwards in team meetings, where we sew report fragments and rethink the interventions and the dialogue with the child's protection network.

Two or three weeks after this afternoon, we found the whole village in bustle. Children and women spoke driven by despair. No one had slept that night and many others. The police had been violently crashing into the houses during the early morning and implemented a terror atmosphere throughout the village. A boy, crack user, had been beaten by the Military Brigade, in the middle of the village, throughout the night. His screams woke everyone. Fear prevented any action. He had been beaten almost to death and still hadn't had any medical help. The women's request, when we got to the House, was that we called the municipal ambulance service because perhaps we, from

⁴GAGNEBIN, Jeanne Marie. "Remember, write, forget". São Paulo, Ed 34, 2006, p.54.

the university, could be attended. Being a territory controlled by drug traffickers, government services are basically absent and aid requests are not answered. It is noteworthy that the only person who had the courage to take him off the street and put him in the house, giving shelter to the battered, was a psychotic person.

The children spoke of their experiences in recent times, told the horror stories lived by them, their families and neighbors during the early morning. After breaking the silence caused by fear and also by the unspoken agreement of the territory itself, they ask to play. Begin to fantasize, beautiful and colorful. The first play riding is "Is Mr. Wolf There? I'll take a walk in the woods while Mr. Wolf doesn't come". The run throughout the patio away from the big bad wolf. Freud already pointed out that children play actively with the situations experienced passively. After the telling of horror, they can then escape the big bad wolf. After that they build a Terreira of Umbanda⁵. Children create saint mothers and fathers costumes and ask that an employee wear a skirt and enter the game to "learn how to do it." the invitation was not to play with them: dance or sing, just to see, to learn. the children spent the afternoon incorporating Orixás, swinging skirts, singing and the workers were there watching, witnessing their every move, their wisdom about the Orixás, "old black man" and gypsies. Listening to their songs and protection requests, sustaining a symbolic time/space different from the one lived in horror nights in the village.

Umbanda's game had a calming effect for the children. Their requests were listened to by someone. Even people on the street, stopped to look at the beautiful game that they built. The entire staff was with them listening about the horror and then, sustaining an Other space. We witnessed the reports and also the creative power of these children. When the subject is heard, one can rest and soothe the anguish experienced since the night before. And that's how the kids ended the game and went to their homes long before the end of the afternoon. The logical time established the end of our work that day.

Returning to the concept of witness in Gagnebin, she tells us that it is not about the person who saw with his own eyes. The witness would also be the one that will not leave, the one that can hear the unbearable story of the other, because only the symbolic transmission, taken despite and because of the unspeakable suffering, only that reflective rebound of what was experienced can help not to repeat it but to dare sketch another story, to invent the present.

Miriam Debieux Rosa believes there is a specificity in the listening of these subjects that are permanently exposed to violence and to exclusion. She says, "You have to take into consideration that the exclusion from goods access, from the *jouissance* forms of this moment of culture has as a consequence in the subject a remnant effect. Do not confuse this place of rest in the social structure with a subjectivification of the lack

⁵Umbanda: Afro-Brazilian religion whose "priests / priestesses" or cult leaders are called *pais de santo* [saint fathers] or *mães santo* [saint mothers]. Songs and dances are used as means to incorporate/engage with the *Orixás* deities [orishas] African-American deities, the *preto-velhos* [spirits of old slaves] or *ciganas* [Gypsies].

which promotes the desire. The subject's identification to this place of rest, manure, is one of the factors hindering its positioning in the knowledge plot and that will characterize his speech, marked sometimes by silencing".⁶

We bring here, through the dream of Primo Levi, the horror of the absence of listening. Primo Levi in the Auschwitz field, discovers a recurring dream in almost all of his companions and in himself. He dreams of coming back home, with the intense happiness to tell the ones around him the horror passed and still alive, and suddenly realizing with despair that no one listening, that the listeners get up and go away, indifferent. Primo Levi asks, "Why the suffering of each day translates constantly in our dreams, in the ever-repeated scene of narration that others do not hear?". (P 86)

Gagnebin also considers the character that gets up and walks away in indifference. There is a choice there that needs to be considered. We don't have to apologize when, luckily, we are not the direct heirs of a massacre; and if, moreover, we are not deprived from words, but rather, if we can make the word exercise one of the fields of our activity, then our task would perhaps be much more to restore the symbolic space where we can articulate an analytic-third- one that is not part of the vicious cycle of the torturer and the tortured, the killer and the murdered, that thing that, signing a possible elsewhere outside the deadly executioner-victim pair, gives a human sense of the world again.

The focus of the project/program that we are developing is to be this analytic-third that allows, by its presence and its desire to maintain the space and listening, the opening of gaps in time, cracks in time. Time makes the meaning open up. It's necessary to set up a time to speak of the invasions of the violence.

Our bet is on psychoanalytic listening. In its power to produce structural and organizing effects.

When dealing with situations of so much violence there is a huge risk of being taken in guilty and victimizing speeches, or that wish to affirm the definitive truth about what is violence, crime, the pain and all that, ultimately, ends up closing the paths to listening. The risk, according to Endo, instead of testimony, is having merely a "speech clung to himself, unsure of its own fragile truth it conveys, also immersed in doubt and that, therefore, tends to proclaim itself repeatedly to exhaustion, making derisive - and not essential, as in the witnessing - the interlocutor presence."⁷

It's in the testimony, from the meeting mediated by listening that there may be commitment and responsibility for what they one says and listen. An encounter that, in order for there to be a listening (as defines psychoanalysis) is mediated by a "ignorance

⁶ROSA, Miriam Debieux. "A psychoanalytic listening of drought lives" In Textura. Revista de Psicanálise, n. 2, USP, São Paulo, 2002, p. 12.

⁷ENDO, Paulo Cesar. "Violence in the heart of the city.". São Paulo, Escuta, 2005, p.265.

principle", thus defined by Endo⁸, from both the listener and the speaker so that the unknown arises. That this unknown can get out of the object-manure condition that society puts him, so that the lack-to-be doesn't mean a threat but as an encounter with which one can produce the new.⁹

Our intervention consists in betting on the subversive value of the word, being able to take these subjects from silencing and violence; listening to children and adolescents as subjects and being able to offer them other ways to elaborate their pain, worries and habitual ways of reacting, not needing to be attached to a repetition, but identifying other versions, other possible scenes, other plots.

We propose an environment that can fulfill its function, as taught in Winnicott: shelter and provision, law and recognition

Children and adolescents circulating on the House have a voice in decisions: they participate in the development and understanding of the rules of coexistence. We sustain a place that seeks not to end the possibility of dialogue preserving the law of the House: no one can be injured or assaulted.

We follow the maxim of Françoise Dolto in Maison Vert: do not talk about children, we talk to children!

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⁸*ibid.* P. 265.

⁹ROSA, Miriam Debieux. "A psychoanalytic listening of drought lives" In Textura. Revista de Psicanálise, n. 2, USP, São Paulo, 2002, p. 13.