

Depiction of home space in Portuguese picturebooks

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Abstract

The purpose of this text is to present, characterise and reflect upon a corpus of Portuguese picturebooks, published between 1969 and 2010, which depict home living space, in order to identify and typify the evolution which occurred in its representation. A close reading of selected picturebooks can exemplify the evolution of the depiction of home space over time, by characterising not only the symbolic connotation of intimate and personal spaces in picturebooks, but also their relevance, i.e., the different levels of importance and visibility they acquire. The text also aims to identify the main trends emerging from the corpus regarding the main themes addressed and the different kinds of picturebooks included. Finally, the conclusions will underline the great development of Portuguese picturebooks, in terms of literary and visual quality, including the relevance of peritexts and of the materiality of the picturebooks.

Keywords: picturebooks; home space; Portugal; family; publishing

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1. Introduction: Depiction of home space in children's literature

As a contribution to an international project entitled “The construction of the sense of *espace vécu* in European children's literature in the second half of the 20th century (1945-2010). An international historical and comparative survey on picturebooks”, led by the University of Padova, this text analyses a corpus of 22 Portuguese picturebooks, published between 1969 and 2010. The purpose of the global project was to compare picturebooks from different European countries in order to reflect on the evolution of space depiction throughout space and time.

Children's literature is often defined by the importance of home (Wolf, 1990), as a narrative pattern that traditionally establishes both the beginning and the end of a story (Nodelman & Reimer, 2003). Home can be also a symbol of protection and security depicted in several classic fairy tales and Perry Nodelman (2008) states that the house “represents above all a place where change is unlikely or even impossible, a safely static enclosure designed to keep uncertainty and flux outside” (p.66). Nevertheless, the studies dedicated to analysing the depiction of home space tend to interpret its relationship with other subjects and themes, such as power (Dougals, 1991; Alston, 2005), representation of gender stereotypes (Tognoli, Pullen & Lieber, 1994), or psychological space (Dewan, 2004) and a chronotope (Krogstad, 2016) of special relevance. Wilson & Short (2011) analyse the evolution regarding the mythology of home in contemporary and postmodern texts, questioning how it reflects the adult construction of childhood.

The home is probably one of the most important depicted living spaces, perceived not only as a physical space (the house), but also as a place invested with subjectivity and personal perception, being related to concepts such as family, protection, security, shelter and affection. Mallet proposes a review of the subject of home, by reflecting on “the dominant and recurring ideas about home represented in the relevant theoretical and empirical literature” (Mallet, 2004, p.62). In addition to the relationship between the terms “house” and “home” and the evolution of the concept of *home* that “became the focal point for a form of ‘domestic morality’ aimed at safeguarding familial property, including estates, women and children” (Mallet, 2004, p. 65), the dominant conclusion is probably related to the complexity of the term, understood as “repository

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for complex, inter-related and at times contradictory socio-cultural ideas about people's relationship with one another, especially family, and with places, spaces, and things" (Mallet, 2004, p. 84). That is why the term can easily be associated with feelings such as comfort and intimacy, as well as oppression, violence and suffering. Understood as an ideological construction, *home* can provide a context for analysing different ideas, concepts and practices.

As the first place children know, the domestic space is a special place in their imagination and affection. The memories, hopes and dreams related to home result in a personal investment of subjectivity also linked to the "territory of intimacy". Studies concerning childhood geographies (Bavidge, 2006) analyse domestic and school spaces, as they seem to be most frequented by children and to have a very important role in children's imaginary. In a study concerning picturebooks depicting houses, Frouillou (2011) concludes that the majority of picturebooks "s'appuient en partie sur des représentations archétypales, sont à la fois révélatrices de la vision d'un adulte de l'enfance, et en un sens de la façon dont les enfants se représentent 'effectivement' le monde" (Frouillou, 2011, p. 8). Nevertheless, she identified some picturebooks that challenge the stereotypes of domestic space, proposing new kinds of organisation and appropriation of space and objects, depicting alternative spaces and social codes.

2. The Portuguese context regarding children's picturebooks

Without a long or solid tradition in the creation of picturebooks, as a result of the country's political regime decision as far as translations into Portuguese is concerned,¹ the research on the origins and development of picturebooks only started in Portugal around the '80s (Pires, 1983; Rocha, 1984; Gomes, 1998). Initially, researchers associated picturebooks with books aimed at very young children, underestimating their literary and artistic value. That is why this type of publication remained barely explored until the end of the 20th century, with a few exceptions of a set of translations of foreign books. In addition, the classic Portuguese children's literature that emerged in the last decades of the 20th century is characterised, on the one hand, by its formative and pedagogic value, and, on the other hand, by the dominance of texts over illustrations (even when they were created by important visual artists). This script-centred literature remains indeed as a model for many writers, scholars or even adult readers until

nowadays, despite the increasing – and internationally recognised – quality of Portuguese illustration.

Thus, apart from isolated experiments in the '60s with the work of Leonor Praça, Portuguese picturebooks only began to appear in the late '80s and early '90s, associated with creations by the Portuguese artist Manuela Bacelar, who studied in Prague and won the Bratislava award in 1989 (Rodrigues, 2013). Bacelar was mainly responsible for the publication of the first high quality picturebooks in Portugal in which text and image establish a synergic relationship in order to tell a story. Being the single author of several picturebooks, which was also a novelty in the Portuguese panorama, she was sometimes underappreciated as a creator and experts did not validate her pioneering work for several years.

It took over a decade to see the emergence of a whole generation of illustrators responsible for the creation of picturebooks of great aesthetic quality that came to be deservedly recognised by scholars, critics and the public in general. These “classic” illustrators such as Teresa Lima, João Caetano, Cristina Valadas or João Vaz de Carvalho, born in the late 1950s and early 1960s, started illustrating in the 1990s and had studied visual arts, painting, and sculpture.

At the beginning of the 21st century, the translation of classic works and recent bestsellers in this area increased the Portuguese interest regarding picturebooks, even in universities, where the illustrations became to be considered as objects of research and study in master's and PhD theses in the fields of literary studies, education and design, for instance. The presence of Portuguese picturebook researchers in international conferences and the publication of papers about Portuguese picturebooks aimed at an international audience have also increased significantly in recent years.

In the last decade, new illustrators,² as well as canonical ones, have distinguished themselves by their singularity, presenting new and challenging visual proposals, namely in the creation of picturebooks. And with new and specialised publishing houses and the special attention given to illustration and book design, particularly regarding picturebooks, the quality and diversity of Portuguese illustration has been internationally recognised and distinguished with several important awards. Regarding recent developments in picturebook creation as well as contemporary trends in Portuguese illustration, we can underline: its increasingly elaborate and complex

relationship with text, which has been challenging the traditional dominance of text over image; the introduction of visual elements that promote surprise, humour, questioning and reflection; the creation of a personal style, original and easily identifiable (a kind of visual signature); the growth of the illustration inside the picturebook, occupying entire book pages, as well as its displacement into other parts of the book (back cover, cover sheet, endpapers, etc.); and its playfulness through the introduction of visual games, the promotion of intertextual readings, the presence of parody of texts or the construction of visual narratives and parallel ones, among others.

3. Methodology: selection of the Portuguese corpus

As part of the project “The construction of the sense of *espace vécu* in European children’s literature in the second half of the 20th century (1945-2010). An international historical and comparative survey on picturebooks”, and in order to identify the best examples of picturebooks that depict home space in each country, the researchers involved in the project had to follow some specific criteria, such as the high quality of the verbal and visual narratives and the selection of award winning, honoured and highly recommended picturebooks. The aim was to choose 6 books in each decade, from the 1950s to 2010.

Due to the specific Portuguese context, we were only able to identify a total of 22 picturebooks, distributed over five different decades, as follows:

Table 1. The analysed corpus

Picturebook creators		Title	Year	Decades
Author	Illustrator			
Leonor Praça		<i>Tucha e Bico</i> [names of the two protagonists]	1969	
Maria Isabel César Anjo	Maria Keil	<i>O inverno é o tempo já velho</i> [Winter is time already old]	1971	1971-1980
Maria Cândida Mendonça Soares	Fred	<i>O arco-íris da amizade</i> [A rainbow of friendship]	1978	
Leonor Santa Rita	Ana Leão	<i>Um sótão com música</i> [An attic with music]	1979	

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Picturebook creators		Title	Year	Decades
Author	Illustrator			
Leonor Santa Rita	Cristina Malaquias	<i>Histórias da manhã cedo</i> [Stories in the early morning]	1980	1981-1990
Luísa Ducla Soares	Raul Ramalho	<i>A menina branca e o rapaz preto</i> [The white girl and the black boy]	1985	
António Torrado	Concetta Scuderi	<i>Devagar ou a correr</i> [Slowly or at a run]	1987	
Natércia Rocha	Jorge Palha	<i>No quarto da Rita</i> [In Rita's bedroom]	1988	
Manuela Bacelar		<i>Este é o Tobias</i> [This is Tobias (name)]	1989	
Manuela Bacelar		<i>O meu avó</i> [My grandfather]	1990	
Natércia Rocha	M. Manuela Costa	<i>A visita aos avós</i> [Visiting the grandparents]	1990	
António Torrado	Susana Oliveira	<i>Vamos contar um segredo</i> [Let's tell a secret]	1992	1991-2000
Natércia Rocha	Isabel Pissarra	<i>História de um gato</i> [Story of a cat]	1994	
Natércia Rocha	Isabel Pissarra	<i>A Avó Leonor</i> [Grandmother Leonor (name)]	1994	
Natércia Rocha	Isabel Pissarra	<i>História de uma boneca</i> [Story of a doll]	1994	
Manuela Bacelar		<i>Era uma vez a Bublina</i> [Once upon a time there was Bublina (name)]	1996	
Rui Zink	Manuel João Ramos	<i>O bebé que... não gostava de televisão</i> [The baby who didn't like television]	2002	
Marta Torrão		<i>Come a sopa, Marta!</i> [Eat your soup, Marta! (name)]	2004	
Daniel Barradas	Carla Pott	<i>Cotãozinho e os seus irmãos</i> [Little Fuzz and his siblings]	2004	
Ana Saldanha	Yara Kono	<i>O papão no devão</i> [The bogeyman under the stairs]	2010	
Isabel Minhós Martins	Bernardo Carvalho	<i>O livro dos quintais</i> [The book of backyards]	2010	
Isabel Minhós Martins	Yara Kono	<i>A Manta</i> [The quilt]	2010	

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Taking into account the difficulties encountered, the criteria used to select the Portuguese *corpus* resulted from a combination of elements. First of all, due the lack of production before the '90s, we decided to include pioneering works such as *Tucha e Bico*, by Leonor Praça, a promising artist who died very young leaving her work unfinished, considering it as the first “real” picturebook published in Portugal, where the synergy between text and pictures is quite visible, along with several other books in which illustrations start to play an important role, even if they are quite secondary in relation to the text.

Indeed, until the 21st century, where the choice was wide, different criteria had to be included in order to constitute a *corpus* to analyse, such as: the books available in a specific period that would somehow allude to home space; some kind of proximity with the picturebook format (before 2001); and the relevance of authors and illustrators.

Only in the last decade under study was it possible to introduce, in a definitive and comprehensive way, the criterion of quality, and therefore two picturebooks became eligible for inclusion which won the Portuguese National Award for Illustration³ – *Come a sopa, Marta!*, by Marta Torrão, and *O Papão no Desvão*, by Ana Saldanha and Yara Kono; and one picturebook on the White Ravens list – *A Manta*, by Isabel Minhós Martins and Yara Kono. The six chosen picturebooks from the last decade were also all recommended by the Casa da Leitura⁴ website. Some of the most important Portuguese authors and illustrators, published in different countries and translated into different languages and awarded both nationally and internationally, are included in all decades. The presence of single authors, responsible for both text and images, is reduced to Leonor Praça, Manuela Bacelar and Marta Torrão, five picturebooks in total. Given the fact that Manuela Bacelar is the most significant Portuguese creator of picturebooks in the late '80s and throughout the '90s and that her books are quite innovative in terms of their content and in the relationship between text and pictures, three of her books were included in this selection.

In addition to Leonor Santa Rita, important and well-known writers such António Torrado, Luísa Ducla Soares, Natércia Rocha, Ana Saldanha or Isabel Minhós Martins are also represented. Special mention should be made of Natércia Rocha, a well-known Portuguese pioneering scholar in the field of children's literature, who also published several books aimed at children. Due to the lack of offer in some decades, we decide to

include five picturebooks by this creator, as, even if they are not very creative or innovative, they highlight the relevance of illustrations and they include reading proposals that promote early reading competences (especially with very young children), which give rise, from our viewpoint, to a very interesting trend.

Regarding illustrators, the most important are Maria Keil, Cristina Malaquias, Manuela Bacelar, Marta Torrão, Bernardo Carvalho and Yara Kono, the latter four already awarded with the Portuguese National Prize for Illustration. Until the late '90s, the relevance of the illustrator in Portuguese children's literature was underestimated and in the '70s and '80s it was very common to erase any identification of the illustrator from the picturebook's covers (and sometimes even in the first pages), their name only appearing on the credits page.

In the '70s and '80s, classic publishers such as Plátano (and the Caracol collection, from which four books were selected) and Sá da Costa (one book selected) were responsible for publishing illustrated children's books, in small paperback formats, by the most relevant Portuguese writers at that time. Livros Horizonte is another important publisher that started publishing in the '80s and continued in the following decades. Collections such as "Sete Estrelas" (two books selected) and "Ver e Ler" (three books selected) confirm the potential of their catalogue. Other publishers gained importance in publishing children's books, such as Desabrochar (two books selected), Porto Editora (one book) or Afrontamento (one book).

Small Portuguese publishing houses which specialised in children's literature started to emerge in the 21st century and contributed greatly to the expansion and internationalization of children's literature (Bichinho do Conto, one book selected). It is worth mentioning the work developed by Planeta Tangerina, awarded with the BOP – Bologna Prize Best Children's Publisher of the Year in 2013, with two books included in our selection. In addition to these publishers, more global ones are also investing in quality children's books, such as Caminho (one book) and Dom Quixote (two books), both belonging to one of the biggest publishing groups in Portugal.

Analysis of the formats, including types of covers, dimensions and numbers of pages of the selected picturebooks, reveals the main transformations in the industry of book publishing in Portugal in the second half of the 20th century. Traditionally available in paperback editions, printed in small formats (14 x 16 cm; 16 x 16 cm), using a limited

number of colours and saddle-stitching-type binding, picturebooks, especially in the '90s, started to be published in hard cover editions, in larger formats (26 x 22.5 cm; 19.5 x 22 cm), using more colours, and being printed and finished as section sewn books. The number of pages also increased (from 14 or 16 to 26 or 32, for instance) and the picturebooks also began to reflect a different investment in graphic design, with illustrations being presented in double-spread compositions, and also in the endpapers, back covers, credits and title pages, for instance. In the last decade, the importance of the book design (created in coordination with the content of the book) has become crucial to the definition of the picturebook format. Taking this into consideration, it is no surprise that our selection of pictures includes only 10 hard cover editions, of which 6 were published in the last decade analysed. The oldest one is *Este é o Tobias*, published in 1989, but even in the '90s it was very common to find paperback editions as well as the use of only two colours, like in *História de uma boneca*, and *História de um gato*, for instance. *Era uma vez a Bublina*, published in 1996 (fig. 1), emerges therefore as an innovative, uncommon and special picturebook in terms of format, where the oval shape at the top of the pages is used differently and in an original way on every page, by introducing new content/visual elements to the story which is being narrated (fig. 2), and we can also find the use of double spreads. This picturebook tells the story of a small witch and her cat. She is very creative, she loves colours and painting and she discovers art when she travels to the country of colours. She returns home and decides to paint her entire room (walls and the bed) (fig. 2).



Figure 1. Cover of *Era uma vez a Bublina*

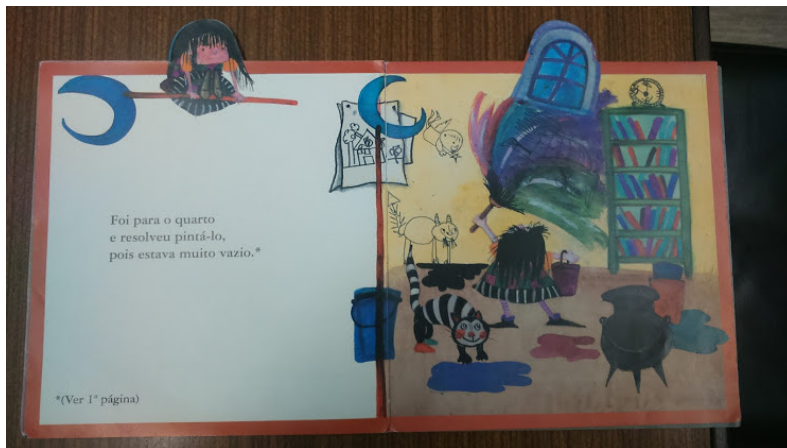


Figure 2. Example of a doublepage spread

4. Global characterization of selected books

Globally, the great majority of the picturebooks selected are fictional narratives (with the exception of *A visita aos avós*, a picturebook that presents similarities with a non-fiction picturebook, since it explores vocabulary). Three of the picturebooks selected *História de um gato* (fig. 3), *A Avó Leonor*, and *História de uma boneca*, by Natércia Rocha and Isabel Piçarra, belong to a specific collection aimed at very young children and have clearly pedagogical purposes. Thus, they include suggestions for activities and questions for adult readers and mediators to explore the picturebook with children. Even if the literary quality of these four picturebooks is lower than the preceding or following decades, these small format books were specially created to develop early reading competences and had quite a formative impact at the time, due to their low sale price.

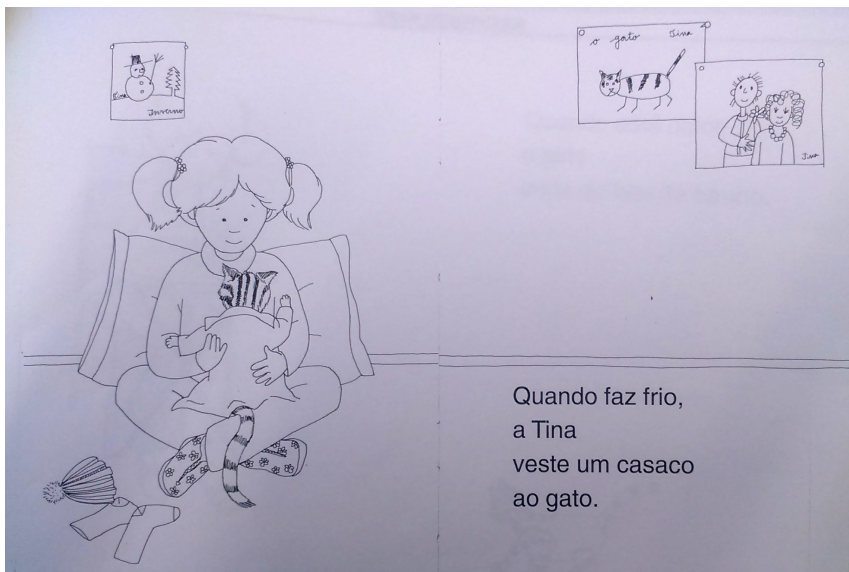


Figure 3. Example of a double page spread of *História de um gato*

Regarding the analysis of the main trends in picturebook composition, the time is mostly undetermined, at least in an explicit way, but the depiction of actions and the space suggest a sort of “undefined present”, since historical or chronological factors do not seem to have any relevance to the narratives. Actions can present daily routines or can occur without explicit references to a special time of the day. Nevertheless, there are stories that take place at a special moment of the day, like in the morning or in the evening, related with the main message or content of the picturebook (*Histórias da manhã cedo*, for example, takes place in the morning as the title of the book intimates). Although one book clearly identifies the season of the year it refers to, by addressing the consequences of winter on children’s and adults’ routines (*O Inverno é o tempo já velho*), the majority of books do not include references to the time of the year. *O livro dos quintais* dedicates each double spread to a different month (like a calendar), illustrating how changes in the weather influence the behaviour of the characters. *O Papão no Desvão* takes place at night, depicting the child’s fears of a bogeyman under the stairs. The actions depicted in most picturebooks are simple, concentrated and linear, presented in an episodic format. Nevertheless, in some cases, a clear “traditional” narrative is hard to identify, since the picturebooks adopt a more descriptive structure, presenting different scenes on each page, not always organised in a chronological way (*Tucha e Bico*, for instance). The use of complex narrative devices, like the *mise en abyme*, is also present in two books (*Este é o Tobias* and *Vamos contar um segredo*), challenging the reader’s reading competences and playing with fictional devices. Realistic trends are dominant in the selected *corpus*, even if it is possible to identify some exceptions, where fantasy is present or can be even a dominant feature: *Cotãozinho e os seus irmãos* (fig. 4), *O papão no desvão*, *Era uma vez a Bublina*.



Figure 4. Double spread of *Cotãozinho e os seus irmãos*

The picturebooks are widely dominated by positive emotions and feelings (such as joy) and rules are rarely broken. Even when fear and disgust are present, these emotions are transient and change at the end of the book, since they express positive messages of hope and well-being. Regarding actions, those of children are depicted in a more active way, with a lot of play, and adults are presented as being seated, reading or eating. The interaction between both is quite limited to activities like reading aloud, eating or preparing and serving food. One fine exception is the picturebook *O Meu Avô*, where the grandfather is portrayed playing on the floor with his grandson.

Home space is not a central theme in the majority of the picturebooks selected, but it is a constant scenario through the entire *corpus*. Four books chosen include references to areas of the house in the title, as we can confirm in the English version of the titles: *An attic with music*; *This is Rita's bedroom*; *The bogeyman under the stairs* *The book of backyards*. There are also two picturebooks with references to objects/household appliances in their titles: *The baby who didn't like television* and *The Quilt*.

The interior (and closed) space of the house is more frequently depicted and there is little information about the surroundings, thus not allowing identification of the main

geographic location. Since Portuguese cities are small and rural areas can emerge in populated ones, probably this aspect is not very clear in picturebooks; so, creators choose to present spaces that are not identifiable, allowing each child to identify it as their own.

The most frequent rooms depicted in the picturebooks selected seem to be the bedroom (12 picturebooks) and the living room (10 picturebooks). When we analyse the narrative relevance of these spaces, the living room is also the most significant space in a group of 7 picturebooks. The bedroom is mainly depicted as a private space where children or other protagonists usually appear alone, while the living room and the dining room are depicted as social spaces, where the interaction between characters is more likely to occur. Furniture features are often used to identify spaces, rooms and users: the sofa, for instance, appears as a kind of symbol of the living room and it belongs to adults, parents and grandparents. Children use chairs, benches or they also use the floor quite often. Regarding objects, children's personal objects are quite frequently present in different scenes, such as toys, musical instruments, books and drawing materials. Some Portuguese picturebooks also include paintings on the walls and some decorative elements in order to create a recognisable set for the action.

The references to different rooms in each book are quite limited, since the majority of picturebooks only present two or three different spaces. The selection also shows that space is mainly depicted by the presence of furniture and does not include lots of details. For instance, it takes only a bed to identify a bedroom; a sofa to recognise a living room (fig. 5) or a stove to represent a kitchen. Nevertheless, the illustrators prefer to include more objects and details associated with children, in order to promote recognition and personal identification: toys (balls, teddy bears...), games (blocks), boxes, books and paper for colouring/drawing are some of the most frequent elements. The presence of domestic animals, especially cats, is also quite frequent. Some spaces are absent in the Portuguese selection, like the cellar, some are residual and are only present in one book, like the attic or the space under the stairs, for instance. Nevertheless, in those cases, these spaces are relevant enough to be mentioned in the picturebook title, thus emerging as central spaces in the narratives. Some spaces are not clearly identified in the illustration or in the text, since they depict scenes that can take place in different compartments, such as eating or playing. For instance, in Portugal, it is possible and quite usual to have

family meals in the kitchen and only use the dining room for special occasions. Nevertheless, we chose to identify places where characters were having meals as dining rooms. The same occurs with children playing, since the existence of a playroom is not mandatory (or very common) in Portuguese dwellings. Thus, in order to simplify the analysis, we considered those spaces where children are indeed playing to be a playroom.



Figure 5. Double spread of *O Meu Avô*

The home space is also related to daily family routines, such as meals. In the Portuguese selected picturebooks, preparing food and eating are quite frequent activities. In the house, children also frequently sleep, read and listen to stories, play and draw. Ludic activities seem dominant in the picturebooks selected, and children depicted in the picturebooks seem to enjoy themselves most of the time.

Children interact mainly with parents, but there are also a few cases of grandparents present, as well as other children, like siblings. With few exceptions, the traditional gender roles are present in different picturebook from different decades. In general, the narratives include few characters, are centred on children's contexts and present children's perspectives. The adults are limited to family members (and in one case a

domestic employee), such as parents and grandparents. The relevance of grandparents is visible even in some titles: *O meu avô*, *A avó Leonor*, *A visita aos avós*. But in two other books, the relationship with a grandparent and a grandmother is also central to the story, *Devagar ou a correr* and *A manta*, respectively.

The interior home space is, as we have seen, also dominant, but in some picturebooks, outdoor spaces (gardens and backyards) are also present in picturebooks such as *O livro dos quintais*, *No quarto da Rita* (fig. 6), *Vamos contar um segredo*, *História de um gato*.

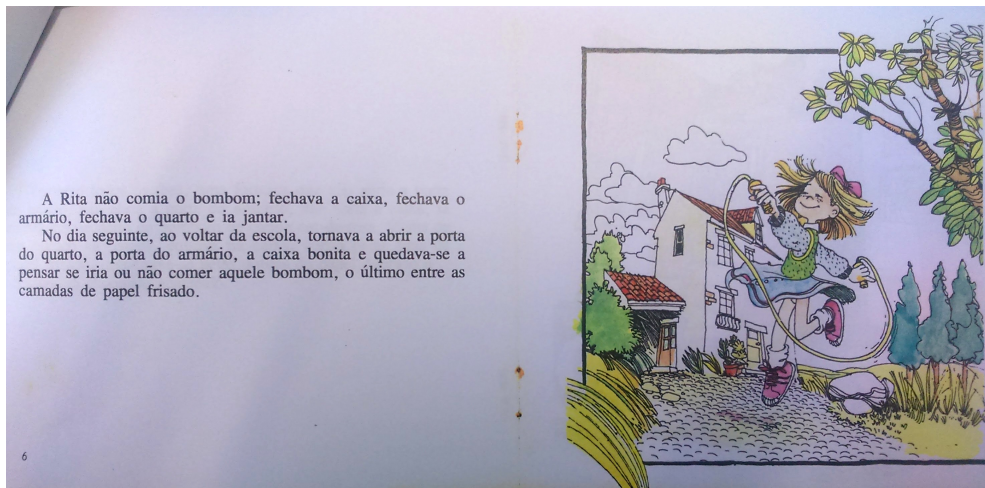


Figure 6. Illustration of *No quarto da Rita*

Since it is impossible to analyse all the picturebooks selected for the purpose of this text, we have chosen some examples from different decades that illustrate the originality and/or significance of the depiction of home space in Portuguese children's literature.

Tucha and Bicó (fig. 7) constitutes a significant landmark in Portuguese children's literature, since this small-dimension soft cover book is clearly a picturebook aimed at young readers, where text and illustrations play an important role. The text describes the activities carried out by two children of 3 and 4 years old (a girl and a boy, respectively), with a special emphasis on toys and games, trips and vacations, school and family.

Aimed at very young readers, the narrative is carried by the two siblings who lend their names to the book, and narrated by the girl, giving an account, in a first-person, clearly infantile speech, of the reality experienced by the two children. Promoting identification by the readers, who recognize themselves in the recreated universe, as well as in the personalities of the two little children, brother and sister, the book stimulates the observation of the images and the way they complete a text marked by brevity, simplicity and restraint. Even if they do not present many elements or details, this picturebook includes several places in the house, such as the playroom (toys, presents, birthday cakes, games), the kitchen (floor tiles), the living room (sofa and children's pictures on the walls), the dining room (table and chair), a backyard (flowers and birds) and the bedroom (since the protagonists are wearing pyjamas).



Figure 7. Cover and backcover of *Tucha e Bico*

We also include in our selection a very descriptive picturebook – *O Inverno é o tempo já velho* – where poverty and child negligence are portrayed, since these themes are not very frequent in children's literature. The author describes the consequences of wintertime on daily life, enumerating good things, like being inside the house, in front of the fireplace (fig. 8), hearing tales, Christmas presents, snowmen, Carnival, among others; but also underlining scenes that sometimes are forgotten, like the cold that poor

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children feel, being shoeless and not having enough clothes to wear. But the most intense scene is that of a shack, where there are two children, one embracing the other in a protective and affectionate way. Since they are barefoot and it is cold, this picture also depicts the lack of conditions, the poverty and the sadness of poor children, always forgotten. Thus, this picturebook depicts social contrast, since the living room symbolises comfort, warmth (perhaps also affection, as the mother is telling stories by the fireplace) and richness, in contrast to the poverty and suffering outside, by children who have to bear the cold.



Figure 8. Illustration of *O Inverno é o tempo já velho*

Este é o Tobias is a metafictional picturebook about the creation of a protagonist for a series of picturebooks. Therefore, the illustrator is also a character of the book and the book she creates is also present at a certain moment of the narrative. Being a sort of a visit to the creative process of making a book and a story, the picturebook allows the

readers to enter the private space of creation and to understand how a character is conceived in the imagination of the creator. Therefore, this picturebook is dominated by two different spaces: the illustrator's office, with a table, a chair and a plant, but also with papers, pencils, paints and paint-brushes; and the houses of the readers, since they can read the book in different places, like the living room (sofa), the nursery/playroom (toys, a chair and books), the hallway (books, and toys) or the child's bedroom (bed, lamp, books, toys and a poster on the wall). But space, in this case, is only a scenario to show how books (fig. 9) are important and how they should be present in daily life of children.



Figure 9. Double spread of *Este é o Tobias*

In *Vamos contar um segredo* (fig. 10), the narrator proposes revealing a secret associated with a painting in a wall (in a living room of a house): inside the house drawn on the painting there is a little man who is looking at a flower, harvested in the garden of the house where the picture is hanging. It ends by appealing to the reader to be an accomplice in this secret, inaccessible to those who cannot see beyond what our eyes tell

us. The *mise en abyme* structure, since the house in the painting is similar to the house where the painting is hanging, is also combined with the idea that paintings (and probably other art forms) have invisible stories and characters living inside them, inaccessible to the eyes, but visible through imagination. The book seems to invite the reader to look beyond the surface and appearance, in order to discover (or to invent and create) the secrets inside. In some way, this picturebook can also be interpreted as a book about literary and/or artistic creation, perceived as the capacity to see invisible/hidden things and to make them visible to and perceived by others.



Figure 10. Cover of *Vamos contar um segredo*

*O livro dos quintais*⁵ distinguishes itself from other picturebooks by the original way in which it depicts home space. This picturebook proposes a different way of telling the stories of a group of neighbours with contiguous backyards (fig. 11) because the narrative is always located in this outer space (Silva, 2012), and follows the chronological thread of the passage of time, like a year calendar, as each double page illustrates a different month and the way it is experienced by the people who share the

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space. Constructed as a game, where it is necessary to read text and images in a complementary way, discovering details, anticipating hypotheses and confirming expectations, this picturebook tests the attention and perspicacity of readers, inviting them to go back and forward in the reading process. The neighbourhood is composed of eight houses, in two lines of four on each side, creating contiguous backyards between them. Each house and backyard, through their architecture, decoration, appearance and uses, shows the character and personality of the family or person who inhabits it.



Figure 11. Final endpaper of *O livro dos quintais*

Awarded with the Portuguese National Prize of Illustration, *O Papão no Desvão* is a picturebook about fears and how to control them. The narrative is very simple and is written in verse. It tells the story of Sofia, a girl who fears the bogeyman who hides himself in the darkest places under the stairs until the day she discovers that the poor bogeyman suffers from loneliness and decides to put her fear aside and approach him, in order to make a new friend. In the case of this book, fears are overcome by courage, but also by humour. The illustrations of Yara Kono clarify the transformation occurred,

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giving an account of Sofia's approach to the bogeyman and the emotions that this discovery (and personal victory) provides. In addition, constructed as a whole, and present in the endpapers and back page, the illustrations collaborate in the reading process, helping to create expectations and confirm interpretations. In an original way, simultaneously sensitive and fun, the illustrator depicts situations, characters and emotions, allowing the reader to identify with the narrative. The illustrations of house compartments and other objects are quite restrained in the book (fig. 12), since the forms and colours used are sufficient to recreate identifiable scenarios. In this case, space is related to the child's fears but also the child's conquest, as, at the end, Sofia and the bogeyman share the bedroom, a very private space, as friends.



Figure 12. Double spread of *O Papão no Desvão*

The small sample of picturebooks briefly analysed here illustrates the singularities and differences between the dominant trends in the *corpus*. It provides information not only about the books analysed, but also of the originality that makes more challenging books distinct.

5. Final considerations

The analysis of the picturebooks selected shows the evolution in Portuguese children's literature mainly in terms of the quality of the publishing industry, which can be seen in the use of larger, colourful formats, the hardcover edition and the double-spread composition, with impact on the global aesthetic (visual and graphic) aspects of the publications. It also illustrates the growing creative investment in peritexts and the attention given to the material elements of the book as an object. Therefore, the development of book design actually seems quite relevant, as does the relationship between texts and pictures or even the way the process of construction of a picturebook gives special attention to all its details and elements. This includes not only the main features, such as covers, back covers and endpapers, but also others, such as the dust jackets, credits and title page, barcodes, types of paper, lettering, size, format and shape, as well as forms of binding. The increasing publication of award-winning picturebooks in recent years is also a result of a growing attention to this format, almost unknown until the '90s.

Nevertheless, the depiction of home space is quite traditional in the majority of the picturebooks, including more recent ones, especially those aimed at young children. They portray family routines in a very positive way, presenting children playing and enjoying themselves in a very comfortable and secure environment. The frequency of objects such as toys, books, games, music instruments, drawing materials and even domestic animals such as the cat stresses the relevance of playfulness in the majority of picturebooks analysed. In a few cases, when problems emerge, such as the rejection of food or fear of the bogeyman, the narratives also conclude with the traditional happy ending.

The relevance in terms of the narrative of areas such as the living room, the bedroom, followed by the kitchen and the playroom underlines the social impact of these spaces, where children interact with adults (mainly parents and grandparents) and, even if less frequent, with other children. The traditional family and conventional role models are dominant in the majority of the picturebooks, including the contemporary ones.

The traditional narrative structure and very linear composition present in the majority of the picturebooks confirms the idea that they are aimed at young readers, but other

picturebooks are differentiated by the use of metafictional devices, such as *Este é o Tobias*, by Manuela Bacelar, or *Vamos contar um segredo*, by António Torrado and Susana Oliveira. By not presenting a traditional narrative or by including different narrative devices, like *mise en abyme*, they challenge and develop the children's reading competences, helping understand questions related to fiction and even metafiction.

Interior spaces are also dominant, confirming the idea of security and intimacy associated with home space, but some picturebooks are distinguished by the original way they depict home space, especially in an outdoor environment, as is the case of *O livro dos quintais* [The book of backyards], by Isabel Minhós Martins and Bernardo Carvalho. In this case, the relevance of outdoor home spaces, such as gardens and backyards, perceived as transition spaces (Mallan, 2003) between wild nature and close/intimate space, function as an extension of the indoor spaces, a sort of metonymy of each family's behaviour and personality: "Though it is located within the domestic domain and its perimeters are often bounded by a fence, the backyard still offers a space for freedom of movement and covert play that is not always possible within the confines of the family home" (Mallan, 2003, p. 168).

Clearly related to family routines and childhood experience, the picturebooks selected underline the idea that the evolution in Portuguese children's literature in the last five decades is more visible on a "formal" level, due to the illustration and printing techniques than in terms of themes, subjects and literary approaches. The innovation results mainly from the new narrative possibilities of the picturebook format, allowing text, illustrations and support (object) to interact and to tell a story. Depicted as idyllic and almost faultless, the domestic space is the metaphor for shelter and security, a sort of a paradise for the perfect development of the child, surrounded by affection and adult protection, not far from the myth of home (Wolf, 1990; Wilson & Short, 2011) that characterised more traditional children's literature.

¹ The dictatorship that ruled Portugal from 1926 to 1974 kept the country isolated from Europe in most areas, including the cultural and artistic movements that had an impact on children's literature. Censorship and limits imposed by the regime on the publication of translated picturebooks into the national language contributed substantially to the delay in the evolution of Portuguese children's literature until the '80s.

² I call these "generation X" illustrators, as they were born in the 1970s, they started illustrating in the early 2000s and they studied graphic design, visual design, and communication design, aspects which, in my view, can explain the attention they give to the creation of elements of picturebooks as artefacts. This generation includes creators such as Bernardo Carvalho, Madalena Matoso, Marta Madureira or João Fazenda, for instance. More recently, a newer generation has been emerging, "the Newcomers". They were born in the 1980s, they started illustrating in last couple of years, and they have studied illustration, including specialisations and master's degrees in this specific field. The academic specialisation of the creators of picturebooks, as well as the contact with international and global trends in the area, can help explain the exponential growth of Portuguese children's illustration around the world. Catarina Sobral, Madalena Moniz, Jaime Ferraz and Joana Estrela are some of the examples of illustrators who are also single authors of picturebooks.

³ This is the most important Portuguese award for illustration in children's books.

⁴ Casa da Leitura is an educational official platform aimed at teachers, librarians and reading mediators.

⁵ Included in the "100 Outstanding Picturebooks" (dPICTUS), Frankfurt Book Fair 2018.

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