

## Education, literature and humanization: Conversations with Freire and Cândido



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### ABSTRACT

The present work results from a bibliographic study, in which it is sought to understand the possibilities of reading the world and human formation, from the literary work and its contribution to liberating education. It is based on Freire's thinking about education from a perspective of problematization, critical formation, humanization and on the ideas of Antônio Candido, for whom the literary work is

likely to form and humanize. In this process, we dialogue with the work *Acari Zebra*, which expresses the life of a rare species native to the Xingu River. Emerique (2018), highlights from this work the living conditions of the species in the waters, which has its natural habitat modified with the implementation of a hydroelectric plant, which also interferes with the way of life of the local population. The work is structured in two topics that are articulated: in the first, the conceptions of Literature, humanization and education are addressed, according to selected authors, then, it is reflected from the mentioned literary work, the link between literature, reality and its social plots. The research highlights the potential of the literary work to think about the complex relationships that human beings establish in society, and with nature in the name of their survival and progress. In view of the above, it can be considered that literature can educate, not according to an official pedagogical ideal, but from the dialogue with the emotions, with the sensitivity of the subjects and stimulating the ability to understand and reflect on reality.

**Keywords:** Literature, Liberating Education, Humanization.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

In the present study, we dialogue with the thought of Paulo Freire and Antônio Candido, authors from different areas, however, whose meeting is inevitable, their works express a dialectical understanding of reality, are defenders of democracy, human formation, freedom of thought and expression, critics of instrumental education and of the society that generates social inequalities. For Freire (2021), education should not occur in an imposing and disjointed way from a reading of the world, since human formation involves elements of a political, economic, social, and cultural order. Cândido (2004) tells us that literature dialogues with its time, the ground of history, society and culture is its cradle; It creates and recreates worlds that does not distance itself from reality and the relationships that surround it, they are its references.



In this perspective, we sought to reflect Literature in Antônio Candido and Education in Paulo Freire, focusing on their formative and humanization potentials of the subjects in a critical, political and transformative perspective. To contribute to the reflections based on a dialogue of the literary text and its context of inspiration, the work *Acari Zebra*, authored by Rosangela Emerique, is inserted in the studies. The studies are bibliographic-based, consisting of the selection of the theme, the authors and their works, the elaboration of reviews and the performance of analyses.

The study was guided by the following questions: Can literature contribute to the pedagogy of the oppressed? Is human, critical and liberating formation possible from the literary work? Is it possible to have formative experiences mediated by literature? The result of this dialogical exercise is structured in two topics in the present work, in the first one an approach to the thought of Antônio Candido is carried out, highlighting the conception of literature, formative possibilities and humanization of the subjects and its specificity as an inalienable human right; respectively in Paulo Freire, it focuses on the conception of education, the reading of the world and the relevance of the critical formation of subjects to combat social inequalities.

Next, there is a dialogue between the ideas of the aforementioned authors and the work *Acari Zebra*, reflecting the context to which the literary work refers to the Xingu River, the riches of the region and the implementation of the Belo Monte Hydroelectric Power Plant and its impacts on biodiversity and on the population directly and indirectly affected by the project.

## **2 EDUCATION AND LITERATURE: FORMATIVE POSSIBILITIES FOR HUMANIZATION**

The current social and historical context is marked by unequal relations between subjects and nations, the capitalist mode of production, the predominant economic model, has been studied and questioned, having seen, the concentration of wealth that it promotes and the resulting exclusions from this process, however, it is a system that has a sustaining superstructure, and education has been used as an instrument to defend its interests. However, it is necessary to rethink this model of society, in the face of the barbarities and injustices suffered by the majority of the population, and education also presents itself as a way to form subjects who reflect the context in which they live, who can understand it and express sensitivity and commitment to contribute to its transformation.

In this perspective, we use the works of Freire (2018) and Candido (2004), who manifested sensitivity to social inequalities and commitment to contribute to the critical, sensitive and human formation of subjects. In view of this, a dialogue is promoted with these authors in order to think of new formative paths for this purpose based on the literary work.

Candido (2004), when dealing with literature, points out that the literary work as an object of knowledge can be studied taking into account issues related to the author, its validity, values, the way it acts psychically, how it articulates itself with a social, historical, political, and cultural context; In



addition, it can be understood outside the system of works, but from its strength, humanizing and forming man. The literary work has a social function and the ability to confirm humanity in men, at the same time as it manifests it, contributes to recreating it. About humanization, it is expressed as follows:

I mean here by humanization.... the process that confirms in man those traits that we consider essential, such as the exercise of reflection, the acquisition of knowledge, the good disposition towards others, the refinement of emotions, the ability to penetrate the problems of life, the sense of beauty, the perception of the complexity of the world and of beings, the cultivation of humor... (p.182)

Literature can be a reference for thinking about society and human relations, since it stimulates thinking, emotions, creativity and, although linked to reality, provides these exercises based on its re-elaborations of reality. Cândido (2004), when talking about the human, highlights elements that involve poetic and political sensibility, caring for society, nature and one's fellow man.

In order to understand the relationship between literature and the formation of subjects, it is necessary to resort to the concept of function, as proposed by Candido (1972), who, when dealing with the variations that involve the humanizing function of literature, resorts to the concept of function to refer to the social role of the literary work, showing that this is a dynamic understanding that involves notions of action, process, succession, history, as well as the idea of pertinence, adequacy to reality and values. In order to carry out this analysis, he breaks with the structuralist view of the analysis of the literary work, which understands as incompatible the knowledge of history and structure simultaneously, defending the possibility of one or the other being separated.

As Candido (1972) tells us, the perspective that involves the function encompasses a whole, which includes the values, the writer, the reader, the audience. Understanding is crucial to an understanding of literature and the formation of man. Going beyond modern studies that include only structure in the analysis of the work, the author defends a look directed to function and shows its relevance and pertinence, since literary production involves experience and human production.

Regarding literature, Candido (2004) broadly understands it as a universal manifestation of men, an expression present in all cultures and levels of a society, involving the poetic, fictional and dramatic touch; It is found in folklore, legends, jokes, as well as in the complex written productions of great civilizations, it is not a harmless experience, it can cause psychic and moral disturbances. The literary work has among its functions the recreation of reality from the word, but the book can also be analyzed as a risk factor. It is worth mentioning:

Art, and therefore literature, is a transposition of the real into the illusory by means of a formal stylization of language, which proposes an arbitrary type of order for things, beings, feelings. It combines an element of attachment to natural or social reality, and an element of technical manipulation, indispensable to its configuration, and implying an attitude of gratuitousness. (CANDIDO, 1972:53).



For Candido (1972), in addition to elementary needs, man needs fiction and fantasy, whether he is educated or not, adult, child, primitive or civilized. The human being has a universal need for production and enjoyment and literature is one of the modalities that constitutes itself as an answer that satisfies it, whether it is guesses, anecdotes, puns, books, newspapers, magazines, poems, short stories, photonovels, novels, narratives, comic books, photonovels, radio soap operas, cinema, among other modalities that are based on fiction, poetry and literary language. It is worth mentioning:

Therefore, orally or visually; In short and elementary forms, or in complex extended forms, the need for fiction manifests itself at every moment; In fact, no one can go a day without consuming it, even if in the form of a lottery guess, daydream, ideal construction or anecdote. And so the interest in the function of these forms of systematizing fantasy, of which literature is one of the richest modalities, is justified (p.81)

Fictional and poetic creations can act consciously and unconsciously, exerting a psychological function, in an almost imperceptible way, influencing the formation of subjects as much as the school and the family. The author poses the following question: Can literature educate?

In order to make considerations about the proposed questioning, it is necessary to reflect on the integrating and transforming function of literature, for this, it is necessary to understand that it actually has its referential, which serves as a stimulus for the imagination, however, it is not reproductive, it goes beyond, fantasizing connects to the real, but does so in a coherent and autonomous way, according to the literary language and its resources. Candido (1972) turns to Gaston Bachelard to affirm that reverie is the path of true imagination. "Reverie (rêverie) is incorporated into the poetic imagination and ends in the creation of such images; but its starting point is the sensible reality of the world, to which it is necessarily linked (p.83)."

The relationship between the literary imagination and the concrete reality serves as an exemplification of the integrating and transforming function of literary creation, a process that involves subconscious and unconscious operations, enables literature to exercise an educational function, however, different from the official pedagogy, since it is not constituted in its essence as an instrument for the transmission of ideologies and ways of life based on the interests of the dominant groups. On this issue, Candido (1972) expresses himself as follows:

Literature can form, but not according to the official pedagogy, which usually sees it ideologically as a vehicle of the famous triad, the True, the Good, the Beautiful, defined according to the interests of the dominant groups, to reinforce their conception of life. Far from being an appendage of moral and civic instruction (this cunning apotheosis of the obvious, again in great vogue), it acts with the indiscriminate impact of life itself and educates like it, with ups and downs, lights and shadows (p.83)

The educational action of literature occurs once it establishes a link with life, which provides to expand knowledge, in addition, the exercise of fruition stimulates sensitivity, perception of reality and imagination. Candido (2004) situates literature in the context of human rights, as a necessary,



inalienable good, to which everyone should have access. The author ratifies the link between the literary work and reality, and the possibility of reflecting the concrete world, social problems, cultural issues and processes of social inclusion and exclusion, as art. Thus, it can be considered that literary production also involves power relations and formative perspectives to think about a better and more inclusive world. Important to mention:

Therefore, the struggle for human rights encompasses the struggle for a state of affairs in which everyone can have access to the different levels of culture. The distinction between popular culture and erudite culture should not serve to justify and maintain an iniquitous separation, as if from the cultural point of view society were divided into incommunicable spheres, giving rise to two incommunicable types of destructives. A just society presupposes respect for human rights, and the enjoyment of art and literature in all forms and at all levels is an inalienable right. (p193).

Expanding the reflections that involve the relevance of literature as a good that should be accessible to all, Candido (2004) highlights the human contradictions in the face of scientific and technological development that has been enabling improvements in living conditions, whose comfort and level of quality is not accessible to all, the concentration of wealth, submits the mass of the population to poverty. The greater the inequality in income distribution, the greater the population contingent subjected to a life of hardship, without housing, food, access to basic sanitation, difficulties in health care, lack of access to education and to enjoy literature and art. The inaccessibility of literary works and social inequality result from injustices and denial of human rights.

As highlighted in the introductory words of this text, the thought of Antônio Candido contributes to reflect, together with Paulo Freire, the formation of subjects in a human, critical, ethical, aesthetic and liberating perspective. The literary work enables the articulation of education with society and the paths it points out serve as a stimulus to leave the walls of school institutions, the imposed norms and the established curricula.

Freire (2018) understands education as a non-imposing process that involves dialogue, exchange of knowledge, problematization of reality, and commitment to human, critical, and liberating education. The author was a critic of banking education, given that in this conception educating is limited to the transfer of knowledge and values according to the interests of the oppressive society, transforming students into passive subjects in the teaching-learning process, content files decontextualized from their reality. As it is expressed:

In the "banking" view of education, knowledge is a "donation" from those who think they are wise to those who think they know nothing. A gift that is based on one of the instrumental manifestations of the ideology of oppression – the absolutization of ignorance that constitutes what we call the alienation of ignorance, according to which it is always found in the other (38)



Educational bankarism makes it impossible to read reality in a different way, in view of its commitment to the hegemonic group, favors possessive, oppressive, violent, exclusionary worldviews that restrict free thought. Freire (2018) highlights the need for an education that favors the rescue of the humanity of the oppressed, that frees them from the oppression of the dominating class. In this sense, they propose that the educational act contributes to the liberation of the subjects, based on the pedagogy of the oppressed, in which educators and students are subjects in the process of critical reflection and problematization of reality, as well as capable of recreating knowledge about the world.

The pedagogy proposed by Freire (2018) is not a donation from the oppressor class to the oppressed, it is inspired by the concrete reality and the oppressive, dehumanizing and excluding situations experienced by the subjects. The pedagogy of the oppressed must be thought of by the subjects who live in oppressive conditions and who seek to liberate themselves, in the struggle to recover their humanity, several paths can be taken. In this sense, the literary work can favor education for liberation, since, according to Candido (2004), it stimulates the reflection of reality, sensitivity, allows to expand knowledge of the world and contributes to the construction of new references, as well as is not exempt from going through the sieve of problematization.

According to Freire (2018), the human being has a historical vocation to be more, in this perspective it is necessary to fight against all forms of violence, barbarism, exclusions, injustices and oppressions that generate dehumanization, whether for the oppressed or oppressors, since inhumanity does not only affect the oppressed who have their humanity stolen, but also affects the oppressor, Therefore, the author proposes a struggle in favor of humanity, a process in which education is an element of great relevance.

Education committed to the liberation of subjects and humanization is not apolitical, given that there is no neutrality in educational practice, where there are exclusionary power relations, it is necessary to question them. The oppressors have an interest in immobilizing education that hides the truth, the defense of technical and content-centered training, selected according to their interests, is a disrespect for human nature and a mechanism that favors oppression and inequalities. Freire (2022) points out that the educational act committed to critical and human training does not occur far from ethics and aesthetics. In this sense, it is important to mention:

Women and men, historical and social beings, we have become capable of comparing, of valuing, of intervening, of choosing, of deciding, of breaking, for all of this, we have become ethical beings. We just are because we are. To be is the condition, among us, to be. It is not possible to think of human beings even apart from ethics, let alone outside of it. (p.34)

In Freire's thought, the presence of human beings in the world implies relations of coexistence with their fellow human beings, with nature, ethical relations and processes of creation and



participation in their historical-social context, as well as the understanding that men and women are unfinished.

In this sense, the education of subjects should involve a relationship with ethics, aesthetics, dialogue and criticality. Human formation, according to Freire (2022), requires freedom, discipline, and a break with authoritarian practices that silence subjects. These ideas are in line with the thought of Candido (2004), when dealing with human formation through literary art, considering that its understanding highlights the free exercise of fruition and thought, the capacity for reflection, sensitivity, poetics and politics.

Expanding the considerations about Freire's thought and education for liberation, human dignity and against oppression, the relevance of the act of reading the world and the word for the formation of solidary subjects and a more just society is highlighted. This perspective also dialogues with the formative and humanization possibilities of literature, in this sense, Candido (1972) is used, when highlighting that the literary work involves human experience and production, is connected to reality and through fruition and the exercise of thinking enables readings, which can contribute to a better understanding of reality.

Freire (2021), highlights the importance of thinking about education from the social and individual context of the subjects, emphasizes the need for dialogue with the different, including the antagonistic, emphasizing the importance of reading and writing in a political perspective to favor better social understanding. Important to mention:

The reading of the world precedes the reading of the word, so the subsequent reading of the latter cannot dispense with the continuity of the reading of the former. Language and reality dynamically intertwine. The comprehension of the text to be achieved by its critical reading implies the perception of the relations between the text and the context. (p.36)

For a pedagogy of the oppressed, the deciphering of the word is not a mechanical act, emptied of meanings and relations with a political, economic, social and cultural conjuncture of the subjects. The critical understanding of reality is fundamental for liberating education and implies problematization, reading the "wordworld", Freire (2021) tells us. The banking practice of learning the written word does not make it possible to understand the power relations that sustain social inequality.

In this perspective, the following topic highlights reflections involving the literary text and the dialogue with the work Acari Zebra de Emerique (2018), aiming at an exercise of thinking about the context to which it refers, human formation from literature and education from the perspective of liberation, ethics, aesthetics, critical and sensitive thinking; understanding that literature can stimulate reflection and provide different readings of society, based on the reality it recreates. The deciphering of the word is an educational possibility and a way to re-signify the world, to the extent that it awakens the desire to transform it.



### 3 LITERATURE AND EDUCATION: POSSIBLE WAYS TO READ THE WORLD

The path taken in this production, which dialogues with the work of Paulo Freire and Antônio Candido, glimpses, from the literary work, paths for human formation and a pedagogy committed to liberation and denunciation of conditions of inequality. It is understood that perception through literary art is an experience that articulates subjectivity and objectivity, the world of the subject and the reality re-elaborated in the literary text.

In the work *Acari Zebra* by Emerique (2018), it is possible to perceive the connection between nature and the social spaces created by human beings, as well as making it possible to think about science and technology and their relations with the oppressive system, contributing to the brutalization of the subjects, having seen, that although the reproduction in captivity of the little fish character of the literary work has been achieved, Scientific and technological knowledge was used to modify nature according to the interests and needs of hegemonic groups and capital. Freire (2022) emphasizes the need for critical reflection on scientific and technological knowledge, which should not be deified or demonized, but should be analyzed for its social enjoyment with a view to a humane and inclusive society.

To carry out these reflections, some excerpts from the work *Acari Zebra o peixinho da volta grande do Xingu* were highlighted, with which considerations on this topic are made. It is important to highlight that it is a work of children's literature, according to Hunt (2010) the literary work that is intended for the non-adult audience needs to be thought of from all the criteria that are used for the adult audience, however, it requires greater attention regarding accessibility for this audience.

Emerique's book (2018), tells the story of a little fish that was playing at the bottom of the river, and was surprised by a great noise, ran scared looking for his family, when he found them he realized that other shoals were frightened and sad because many had lost their lives; including your colleague. No one understood what was happening, so they decided to observe to find out why a bomb had exploded in the place where they lived, the Big Bend of the Xingu. They realized that a hydroelectric plant was going to be built. All the fauna and flora were worried, given the serious consequences for the region; They recalled the struggles against this project and the happy days they lived and played safely. Realizing that the hydroelectric project was implemented, they were distressed with fear of extinction, as they are typical of the Xingu region.

The *Acari Zebra* is a species native to the Xingu that inhabits the Volta Grande. The text talks about the Belo Monte Dam built in the Xingu River basin, the project created several expectations for the local population, in terms of job creation, industrialization and the fulfillment of social conditions. Although low-income housing (Urban Community Resettlements) has been built and schools and hospitals have been renovated, they have not been enough to meet local demand: there is a lack of





water in the resettlements, there are waiting lists at hospitals and an increase in cases of violence in the municipality. The expected "development" did not materialize.

During the construction period of the work, many families from other states went to live in the region, municipality of Altamira, however, gradually they were dismissed from work, in a few years, they lived between euphoria and the current abandonment. According to IBGE data, the municipality of Altamira has an estimated population of 117,320 people (2021 data), of this population only 13.4% occupy a formal job with an average salary of 2.1 minimum wages (2020 data), that is, according to the perspective of work, safety, health care and remuneration of the working class, the social issue is worrying.

The work also makes it possible to reflect on the various conflicts that involved the implementation of the project, in which the struggle of organized society in social movements, indigenous peoples and universities, as well as local merchants, concerned with population growth, environmental and social issues, stands out. The text also allows for dialogue with Freire (2018, 2022), as it enables readings of the world, by highlighting concerns about the consequences of the construction of the hydroelectric plant in the region, allowing us to inquire about the difficulties faced, the assistance received, and the consequences for fauna, flora, and other forms of life.

According to Candido (2004, 1972), literature satisfies the human need for fiction and fantasy, articulates itself with a political, economic, social and cultural context, by re-elaborating reality. From this perspective, it can provide knowledge of the world through fruition, reflection and problematization. Some excerpts from the work are highlighted to illustrate the proposed questions:

It was a beautiful sunny day, I was playing at the bottom of the river when suddenly I heard a big noise! A big explosion had happened.

I, not knowing what was happening and a little bewildered, swam in desperation to find my parents. (Emerique, 2018, p.03)

Everyone wanted to understand what had happened and the entire community of fish, amphibians and reptiles planned to meet near the site of the explosion and find out what was going on. Why throw a bomb in the river, everyone wondered! (Emerique, 2018, p.08)

Everyone was flabbergasted and more frightened, and the memory came of the first meeting of the indigenous peoples, which took place in the city of Altamira in 1989. Indigenous peoples and social movements shouted no to Kararaô! (Emerique, 2018, p.20)

In addition to the aesthetics of the literary language and its figurations present in the selected excerpts of Emerique's (2018) work, when referring to the family context, the meeting between friends that took place among the little fish at the bottom of the river, the work enables a connection of worlds and senses, favoring what Candido (1972) highlights: the manifestation of the human and the possibility of recreating it.

The work also favors dialogue with the memories of the people of the region, citing Kararaô highlights the struggles of indigenous peoples and social movements against the implementation of the



hydroelectric dam. In addition, it shows the relevance of rethinking the exploitation of nature for profit, which has caused destruction on the planet, air pollution, rivers, lakes, seas, the destruction of forests and threatened different forms of social organizations and ways of life. Using science and technology, natural resources and human beings are exploited, the system concerned with the production of commodities, concentrating income and showing no concern for resolving the inequalities, violence, barbarism and exclusion that it causes. From this perspective, Freire (2018, 2022) is used to affirm that literature, by providing the encounter between different worlds and realities, can contribute to the oppressed class having in it an educational reference against oppression.

#### 4 FINAL THOUGHTS

Literature can provide the necessary dialogue between education and culture, mediating formative processes of feeling and thinking about reality in a critical, problematizing and humanizing way, different from instrumental educational perspectives that aim to educate according to the interests of the system.

The reflection and problematization of reality are fundamental for the conceivability of a pedagogy based on the oppressed, the human, critical and political formation of the subjects; experiences made possible by literary art, since it provides the opportunity to perceive the world in a singular way from its recreation through the word in a poetic, fictional way. As seen in the work Acari Zebra, which expresses, through literary language, the consequences of the construction of the hydroelectric plant for the biodiversity of the Xingu River, as well as for the population directly and indirectly affected by the project. The work of Emerique (2018) ratifies the social relevance of literature, and its possibilities to know reality, favoring critical reflections and positions in the world.

The dialogue between Paulo Freire and Antônio Candido allows us to consider the possibility of formation through literary art, considering that it dialogues with the humanization existing in the subjects, being a product of this process; Thus, the literary work can modify its creator, in an ethical, sensitive, inclusive and liberating perspective, to the extent that it seeks to understand and problematize the recreated universes and the relations that occur in them, thus favoring a pedagogy, beyond the technical perspectives at the service of capital, understanding the right to education, culture and literature as fundamental to human formation.



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