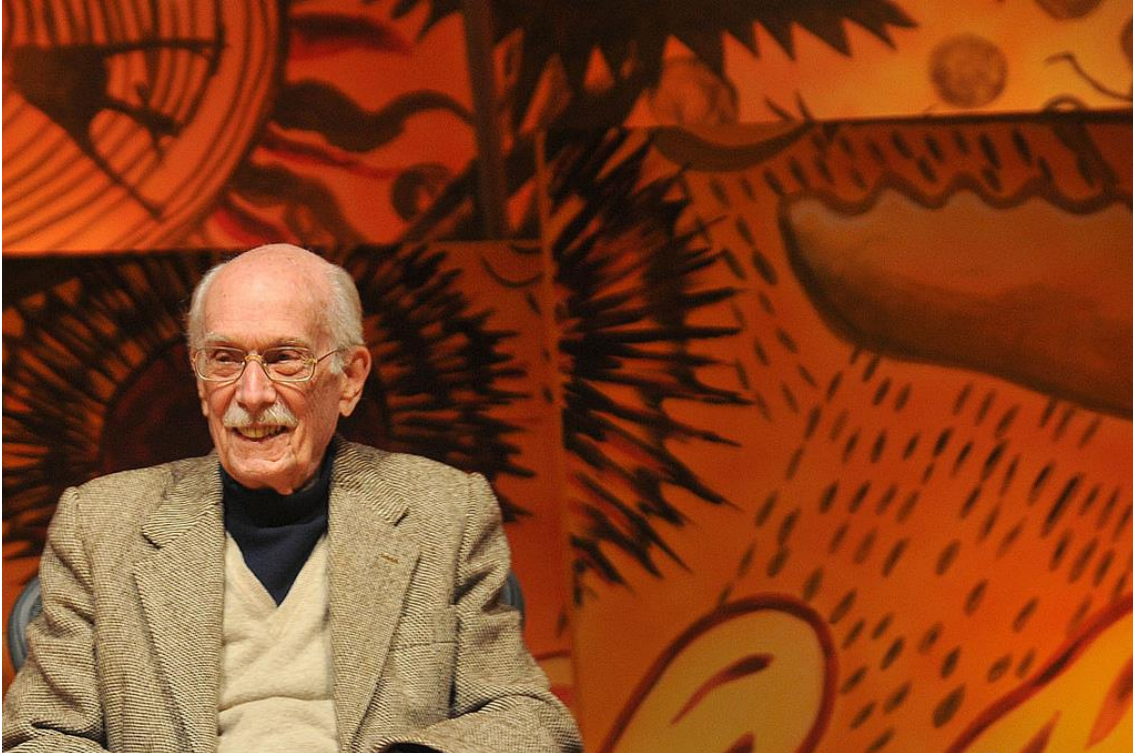


The Master and the Disciple / *O mestre e o discípulo*

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Articles written on the occasion of Antonio Candido's decease provided readers with a balanced outline of his seminal oeuvre and his academic and political role, as well as with testimonies of his former students, who highlighted the importance of the intellectual and even existentialist teachings of the Master of us all.

As a casual student during my first years of college, I had the privilege to attend a poetry course on Baudelaire offered by him. Most likely, this is when my passion for the poet of *Les fleurs du mal* [The Flowers of Evil] developed. He made two observations of a very different nature that impressed me the most. The first one is related to his analysis of *Une Charogne* [A Carcass], a poem that has kept a powerful impact fresh on readers since 1857. It was one of the poems that motivated bitter criticisms at the time it was published, for critics described it as “carcass and slaughterhouse literature.” Until recently, when students read the poem, they frequently looked astonished and disgusted, and Professor Candido would emphasize that the poet

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had dedicated *Une Charogne* to “his girlfriend” – the expression he used. When I was 20, I was more impressed by that remark than by the poem itself. The second one refers to his analysis of *Les aveugles* [The Blind]. He connected the rhythm of the poem to the faltering walk of the blind and added that this was brought to his attention by José Miguel Wisnik, a student from his morning class. Although I had not grasped at that specific moment that his remark was really respectful to the student, I was surprised by it.

Now, as I write this short text, I remember a speech he gave during an event on Maria Antonia St.¹ that aimed to pay tribute to Roger Bastide. It was a heartfelt tribute and a representative testimony to the man Bastide was. And Antonio Candido, a great story teller, as we know, chose the following episode out of so many that he certainly kept in his memory: during an oral exam - naturally in French – whose examiners were Bastide and another professor, Bastide asked Candido (at least that is how he understood it), “Quelles sont les implications sociologiques du Nil?” [What are the sociological implications of the *Nile*?]. The examinee states that he immediately became restless: one is not prepared for questions about Egypt... As he was increasingly doubtful about his answers, he noticed that the examiner was evidently dissatisfied and bewildered, prompting Bastide to repeat the question, which really was “Quelles sont les implications sociologiques d’une île?” [What are the sociological implications of *an island*?] Turning to the examiner, he asked him if he had not noticed his misunderstanding. The examiner said that he had but that he did not want to interrupt him because he was saying some very interesting things. This was the master Antonio Candido, a man who literally had no “pre-concepts” and was utterly respectful to his students.

Some texts that pay tribute to him make comments on Candido’s academic career change from sociology to literature, the result of a long-lasting romance. However, I do not remember his mentioning why he made that choice. Here are his own words:

Bastide’s big influence is attributed to his written production and his direct contact with friends and students. Personally I owe him a lot

¹ Maria Antonia St. is located in the district of Consolação in the city of São Paulo. It is where the Faculty of Philosophy, Science and Languages and Literature was founded in 1934. Today the faculty is located in the district of Cidade Universitária and is called the Faculty of Philosophy, Languages and Literature, and Human Sciences (<http://fflch.usp.br/inicial/en>).

and am surprised when I get caught reading his distant writings and realize that some ideas that I believed were mine were in fact either a result of his influence or explicitly formulated by him. If I may give a piece of personal information, I will tell you that his opinion was a determining factor in my choice between sociology and literature as a university activity. In the early 1950s I asked him about it, and he told me candidly that he thought I was more qualified for the latter (CANDIDO, 1993, p.100).²

This statement first appeared in a special issue (issue 20) of the journal from the *Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros* (IEB) [Institute of Brazilian Studies]. The issue was dedicated to Roger Bastide, a French professor who came to Brazil in 1938 to accept a chaired position in Sociology, left by Lévi-Strauss. He created a generation of intellectuals who were fundamental to our academic and cultural context, such as Florestan Fernandes, M. Isaura Pereira de Queirós, Antonio Candido himself, Gilda Mello e Sousa, Miriam Moreira Leite, among others.

People from my generation and the generation a little before paid tribute to Professor Candido by deeming him to be the Master *par excellence*. However, we can turn our focus to the time when he was a disciple. The tone of the tributes paid to Bastide, after he left for France in 1954, is remarkably similar to those that have been paid to Antonio Candido – even a special issue of *Informe IEB* was published on July 24, 2017, the date when Antonio Candido would turn 99 years old.

We can also notice common traces and similar dimensions in the master's and disciple's perspective on literature, for both would place literature in its social context without losing sight of the literary text.

In Leyla Perrone-Moisés's article on Candido's criticism, entitled *Amor à literatura* [Love for Literature] and published on *Folha de S. Paulo* newspaper on May 12, 2017, we read that

The great lesson of Antonio Candido's sociological criticism is that literature never became to him a mere document to study society. In both his theoretical texts and his critical analysis, he constantly gives

² Text in original: “Além da produção escrita foi grande sua [de Bastide] influência através do contacto direto com amigos e alunos. Eu, pessoalmente, lhe devo muito e às vezes me surpreendo, relendo a anos de distância algum escrito dele, ao verificar até que ponto certas idéias que julgava minhas são na verdade não apenas devidas à sua influência, mas já expressamente formuladas por ele. Se for permitida uma informação de cunho pessoal, contarei que a sua opinião foi decisiva para eu optar entre a sociologia e a literatura como atividade universitária. Consultei-o a propósito nos primeiros anos do decênio de 1950 e ele disse francamente que me achava mais qualificado para a segunda.”

priority to the literary text as such (PERRONE-MOISÉS, *FSP*, 21/05/2017).^{3 4}

Antonio Candido's opinion about the French Professor was very similar:

The articles to which we have referred and also his more systematic studies had a predominantly literary focus. However, their theoretical foundation or interpretation component was almost always the sociological purview, making Roger Bastide one of the few who could safely and successfully use this difficult combination (1993, p.99).⁵

In the same article, Leyla Perrone-Moisés (2017) points out his assessments: “the delicate enunciation of his assessments was never presented as truth judgements that were final and undebatable.”⁶

According to Candido, Bastide's criticism adopts the same criterion:

His primary criterion, which was always stressed in conversations, was to make reality judgments instead of value judgements, thus leaving the task in assessing merits to objective exams. On the one hand, it fostered a universal good will especially in relation to recent production, but on the other, the role in analyzing culture was assigned to criticism (1993, p.99).⁷

In other words, both critics do not defend their views as final and exclusive.

It is also common to find a tone of informality in their texts, which creates complicity with the reader without losing the seriousness and relevance of the analyses. In order to do so, they may sometimes start their texts by making observations from informal conversations. One example is Bastide's text *Sherlock Holmes no Brasil* [Sherlock Holmes in Brazil], published on December 03, 1943. Because Bastide finds it

³ Prior to *Folha de S. Paulo*'s publication, it had been published in a special issue of *Mais!* in tribute to his 80th birthday.

⁴ Text in original: “A grande lição da crítica sociológica de Antonio Candido é que esta jamais consistiu, para ele, em utilizar a literatura como simples documento para o estudo da sociedade. Em seus textos teóricos, como em suas análises críticas, é constante a prioridade por ele concedida ao texto literário como tal.”

⁵ Text in original: “Os referidos artigos, e também os estudos mais sistemáticos, eram de intuito predominantemente literário, mas quase sempre entrava neles a visão sociológica como alicerce teórico ou componente interpretativo, tornando Roger Bastide um dos poucos a usar com segurança e felicidade essa combinação difícil.”

⁶ Text in original: “a enunciação delicada de suas avaliações, que nunca se apresentam como juízos de verdade, definitivos e indiscutíveis.”

⁷ Text in original: “O seu critério dominante, sempre ressaltado nas conversas, era emitir juízos de realidade, não de valor, afastando o problema de avaliar méritos para ficar nas verificações objetivas. De um lado, isso gerava certa boa vontade universal, principalmente com referência à produção do momento; mas, de outro, assegurava à crítica a função de análise da cultura.”

odd that there are no detective novels in Brazil, he inquires a Brazilian friend about it. Then, he develops a theory on the genre in Brazil and even propounds a plot for a detective novel that would be very Brazilian and would take place in Brazil.

As readers of Antonio Candido, we find that he has a similar attitude in his essay on Stendhal, which starts unpretentiously by recalling the “heresy” of a friend who did not appreciate *Chartreuse de Parme* [*The Charterhouse of Parma*] much. This leads him to a reflection that became the thought-provoking essay entitled *Uma dimensão entre outras* [A Dimension among Others].

In this flow of ideas, we find another common element between Candido and Bastide: their rejection of picturesqueness and easy exoticness. This is more noticeable in Bastide, who is able to create some distance in order to read Brazilian authors despite his fascination for Brazil. His opinion about Brazilian canonic authors was opposite to Brazilian critics’ at the time: “Euclides is a foreigner in rural drylands as he will be in the Amazon. He is the man of the coast who discovers an unknown Brazil and reacts to it exactly as a foreigner would: he observes the exotic” (AMARAL, 2010, p.689).⁸

Candido voices a similar opinion in his review of *Sagarana*, which was published in *O Jornal* (1946). He refers to the volumes of regional short stories written by young prosecutors who came from the coast and were assigned to little towns in the country. They were usually fascinated (or “brazen,” in Candido’s own words) about the picturesqueness of the place.

In a text written in 1990, Candido highlights a new perspective on aspects of Brazil found in Machado de Assis’s oeuvre. He analyzes Bastide’s essay *Machado de Assis, paisagista* [Machado de Assis, the Landscaper], published in *Revista do Brasil* in 1940. Bastide’s essay was written two years after he had arrived in Brazil and showed that he had already read a lot of Machado’s oeuvre, his novels and chronicles. Candido is pleased by this new perspective, in which Machado is compared to a painter of Brazilian landscapes through his characters. He is *Machado de Assis de outro modo* [Machado Anew], as the title defines him. To Candido, the adverb “anew” seems “modern and powerful in relation to the criticism of the 1940s” – it is not influenced by picturesqueness, which allows him to approach Machado with no *pre-concepts*...

Our brief observations did not intend to establish a systematic parallel between the oeuvre of the two Masters. We aimed only to show some events in which Antonio

⁸ Text in original: “Euclides é um estrangeiro no sertão, como o será na Amazônia. É o homem do litoral que descobre o Brasil desconhecido, e reage ante ele exatamente como um europeu: observa o exótico.”

Candido's academic career, as he states himself, owes a lot to the French scholars who came to Brazil to teach at the University of São Paulo when the Faculdade de Filosofia, Ciências e Letras [Faculty of Philosophy, Science and Languages and Literature] was founded. We hope that this flow of knowledge and teachings continues to nourish our intellectual selves through such inspiring Masters.

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