

LITERATURE

ANTONIO
CANDIDO

From masters to apprentices

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LITERATURA
FORMAÇA
LITERATURA
MOMENTOS DE
O VOLUME

**The university's contribution
in fields such as literary theory
and film criticism continues**

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alnice Nogueira Galvão was his first assistant and still remembers the details of the years during which they worked together, such as when she learned that a well taught class should be contained in four typewritten pages. Celso Lafer affectionately remembers the care with which he always taught those who studied with him. Maria Augusta Bernardes Fonseca revered him as a brilliant conversationalist who could listen to the contributions of others with respect and attention. They are all remembering Antonio Candido, critic and essayist, and professor emeritus of the University of São Paulo (USP) School of Philosophy, Literature, and Human Sciences. He is also known as “the master,” as Galvão, Lafer, Fonseca and so many others who worked with one of the key thinkers in Brazil prefer to call him.

Fonseca passed her qualifying exam for promotion from assistant to associate professor at USP in 2006 and, the following year,

began to coordinate research projects on the legacy of the works of Antonio Candido. There have been three so far. The first on his essays, the second focusing on interviews, and the third and current studying the prefaces he wrote. “As you can see, they are different facets, with different objectives. Each contains the brilliance of his critical creativity and versatility,” explains the researcher.

Since the first project, she has been collecting summaries based on the “master’s” views on literature. Her first contact with his works was *Formação da literatura brasileira* (The formation of Brazilian literature), Candido’s seminal book, first published in 1959 and still a fundamental contribution to the creation of awareness of Brazilian-ness. It was while pursuing her master’s degree, in the 1970s, focused on Oswald de Andrade’s “*Serafim Ponte Grande*,” that Fonseca had the opportunity to attend his lectures, “long, but tireless for the 200 students who filled the classroom.” The researcher came to see him as a “wellspring of criticism” given the variety and plurality of the aspects that he discusses in his essays. And this also serves as a lesson for Fonseca’s students studying Brazilian modernism. “You cannot avoid reading Antonio Candido when you are studying Oswald de Andrade, Mário de Andrade, Manuel Bandeira, Carlos Drummond de Andrade, Aníbal Machado and others,” she states.

LITERATURE AND SOCIETY

The current faculty in the literary theory and comparative literature department at FFLCH no longer follow the same critical lineage focusing on the relationships between literature and society, an approach that the “master” still defends. But there is no lack of researchers, such as Joaquim Alves de Aguiar, Betina Bischof and Ana Paula Pacheco, who are fully dedicating themselves to, or in some way embracing, the study of Antonio Candido’s works in their research.

It was undergraduate course Theory and Analysis of the Novel, introduced by Candido in the 1960s, that resulted in the Department of Literary Theory and Comparative Literature at FFLCH and its journal, *Literatura e sociedade*. Celso Lafer, the president of FAPESP, took this course. “His Intellectual au-

thority is that of a great master who, over the years, has become a landmark of Brazilian culture,” stated Lafer in an article published in the 2009 *Literatura e Sociedade* issue commemorating Candido’s 90th birthday. In it, he discusses the role Law School played in Antonio Candido’s career. Yes, in 1939 the “master” took and passed the entrance exams to study both social science and law. He completed his degree in the former, but did not finish the latter, despite staying with the course through the fifth year.

“We are children of our times and our schooling,” says Alfredo Bosi, professor emeritus of Brazilian literature at USP, referring to the eclectic university environment of the late 1950s. “Studying literature provided us with both the historical and aesthetic dimensions of literary texts, together with respect for philological scholarship, which was an asset, because we were not imprisoned by any prior system. But as the political climate of the 1960s heated up even before the military coup, feeding leftist reform projects, our conception of literature and culture also changed from a fusion of existentialism and idealism to a view in which consideration of social determination weighed more strongly and occupied the forefront of reflection on the nature and function of literature.

Bosi studied in Florence for a brief period, in 1961-1962, and saw the decline in the influence of Benedetto Croce

(1866-1952), “a passionate Hegelian historian,” and the rise of that of Antonio Gramsci (1891-1932), “a Marxist profoundly interested in the complexity of culture, especially literature.” “After my return to Brazil, rereading Otto Maria Carpeaux and Antonio Candido assiduously, my influences also changed, without losing sight of the intricacies of culturalism and the stylistic reading of texts. Perhaps a desire to display the riches of different perspectives resulted from this syncretic moment, sensitive to the multiplicity of critical views. I sought to transmit this to students, initially as a professor of Italian literature,” says Bosi, who formulated this approach in *O ser e o tempo da poesia* (*Man and time in poetry*), a book published in 1977.

USP professor emeritus Walnice Nogueira Galvão, a fundamental reference in studies of the works of Euclides da Cunha (1866-1909) and Guimarães Rosa (1908-1967), affirms that Antonio Candido was the best professor she had on “five continents,” and with whom she became friends. She visits him weekly and, when she travels abroad, she visits him both before leaving and when returning. With 40 books published, Galvão remembers the time when she was working on her thesis for promotion from assistant to associate professor, in 1972, when Candido, even though he was not a specialist on Eu-

Formação da literatura brasileira, Candido’s seminal work, was published in 1959



Walnice Nogueira Galvão: Antonio Candido was her best professor “on five continents”



Roberto Schwarz: critic of the works of Machado de Assis, he remains an influence in the Literary Theory, Brazilian Literature and Modern Literature departments

clides da Cunha, endeavored to help her find references on the author. “Antonio Candido was always concerned about teaching others, and he did this by sharing with them his love of literature.”

DIALECTICAL CRITICISM

Although he advised many disciples who are now lauded in intellectual circles, such as Galvão, Davi Arrigucci, João Luiz Lafetá and José Miguel Wisnik, Antonio Candido’s most direct heir is Robert Schwarz. Professor of literary theory and comparative literature at USP (until 1968) and of literary theory at Unicamp (1978-1992), he absorbed from the “master” the method of criticism that seeks to understand the complex relationships between literary form and social process. Schwarz was his student as an undergraduate in social sciences, in 1958, the same year in which he was a member of the iconic group in the seminar on *Capital*, by Karl Marx, which also consisted of the intellectuals Ruth and Fernando Henrique Cardoso (later president of Brazil), Octavio Ianni, Fernando Novais, Paul Singer and José Arthur Giannotti. Roberto

Schwarz, together with Leôncio Martins Rodrigues, Francisco Wefort, Gabriel Bollaffi, Michael Löwy and Bento Prado Júnior, was among the most assiduous students. In an interview with Pesquisa FAPESP in April 2004, Schwarz stated that the seminar on Marx was decisive in his education because it “required critical reflection about contemporary society” and, at the same time, distanced itself from the “clumsy understanding” that communist parties had of Marx at the time. Maria Elisa Cevasco, full professor in the USP Modern Languages Department, reminds us of the importance of Schwarz’s dialectical criticism to young students as early as the 1970s, and it remains an important part of thinking for USP students. “His works continue to teach us to construct criticism that helps us decipher the real changes in

history as represented in cultural production,” she states.

Cevasco explains that the work of Schwarz, one of the greatest critics of Machado de Assis, is still read in the Literary Theory, Brazilian Literature and Modern Literature departments at USP. Cevasco has published articles in French and English, book chapters, and organized a book of reflections on *Um mestre na periferia do capitalismo* (A master on the periphery of capitalism),

published in 1990, one of Schwarz’s most emblematic essays. “His way of reading demonstrates that the literary form is an abstraction of existing social relationships,” explains Cevasco. “This type of analysis allows us to see that artistic form is a synthesis that allows us to intuitively understand social interactions, thus providing us with the elements needed to judge them.” ■

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