Odd Partners: Antonio Candido and the *Caipira* Sharecropper

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Abstract: This article argues that *Os parceiros do Rio Bonito* (1964), Antonio Candido's most celebrated sociological work, adopts a cultural framework that subtly undermines the work's progressive political goals. By blurring the distinction between sharecropper—a category defined by economic relations—and *caipira*—a category defined by culture—Candido horizontalizes the relationship between landless and landowners. I argue this is due in part to Candido's class identity as a descendant of rural oligarchies, and to his relationships with other planters—including the owner of the estate where he performed his fieldwork on the living conditions of sharecroppers in rural São Paulo. Even as he strove to produce scholarship with progressive political ambitions, Candido fell back into hegemonical ideologies of consensus. The contradictions of his monograph reveal the aporias of intellectual work gridlocked by political aspirations, intellectual demands, and class habitus. More than a critique of his sociology, the article proposes a consideration of Candido's work as representative of how the engagement of Brazilian intellectuals with the countryside was informed by class relations.

Keywords: Sociology, rural Brazil, labor, class, fieldwork

In February 1948, a young Antonio Candido spent twenty days at a large estate owned by his close friend Edgard Carone. Moved by concern for his friend, who had no experience in rural estate management and could use some support, Candido also found in the Fazenda Bela Aliança the opportunity to observe the life of the farmers who lived there as sharecroppers—or *parceiros*. Since the previous year, Candido had been observing folkloric performances associated with the traditional rural culture of São Paulo, broadly termed *caipira*. He had started a doctorate in sociology and hoped to investigate how the transformation of rural ways of life was affecting *cururu*, a traditional dance performed by the men of that region. The people living in the Fazenda Bela Aliança offered a privileged opportunity. After returning to the capital, Candido spent the next five years working on that project, until deciding on a radical shift: rather than write about folklore, he would analyze the impact of urbanization on the economic life of a rural community. In 1954, he returned to the Bela Aliança, where he spent another forty days performing fieldwork. Defended that same year, the dissertation based on these observations would be published ten years later, with minor revisions, as *Os parceiros do Rio Bonito: Estudo sobre o caipira paulista e a transformação dos seus meios de vida*—now a classic of Brazilian sociology.

Candido's book is divided into three parts. In the first, drawing from colonial sources and the previous historiography of Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, Cornélio Pires, and Alfredo Ellis Jr., Candido sketches a historical sociology of the *caipiras* as a cohesive cultural community descended from the *bandeirantes*. In the second, relying mainly on his fieldwork, he describes the present conditions of *caipira* life in southern São Paulo, where the Fazenda Bela Aliança was located. In the third, Candido analyzes the shifting economic and social conditions leading to malnutrition and precarity among *caipira* sharecroppers, which he connects to the pressure of urbanization on prices and the sociocultural horizons of *caipira* life. Candido's stated goal is to provide sociocultural parameters to support the "reforma das condições de vida do homem brasileiro do campo" (13), easing the transition into the new economic situation. His main concern is with stabilizing factors in *caipira* life, such as land and social networks, which provide the conditions for *caipira* families to adapt. Therefore, land reforms become part of the solution as an instrument of a "planejamento racional" (257) of the social transformation.

Despite Candido's progressive intents, however, *Parceiros* is shaken by constitutive tensions related to how the book came to be. These tensions ultimately undercut Candido's political ambitions with a conservative cultural outlook connected to the ideology of São Paulo's agrarian elites. The first tension is that between culture and economic relations as objects of sociological research. Although folklore gave way to urbanization and malnutrition, the framework of culture remained central for Candido's analysis, with results I explore below. The second is the tension between the perspective of the landless sharecroppers of the Fazenda Bela Aliança and that of the landowning peers of the sociologist. Although the *caipira* sharecroppers were the subjects of Candido's research, his main informants were planters like Carone and Pio Lourenço Corrêa, who offered a sort of enlightened fazendeiro perspective on local realities. As a result, I argue, Candido's rural sociology in *Parceiros* was grounded in the perspective from the fazenda's main house, even as he advocated for land reform. The notion of a *caipira* culture determined Candido's interpretation of the reality of the farmers at Bela Aliança by blurring the distinction between sharecropper and fazendeiro, ultimately equalized by belonging to the cultural *caipira* collectivity. Although the notion of a *caipira* culture dominant in the area of influence of colonial São Paulo was not invented by Candido, his use of it in *Parceiros* flattens class difference in the countryside, reinforcing an image of class consensus that counterbalances Candido's progressive ambitions.

By highlighting the ambivalences in Candido's intellectual and political project, I seek to contribute to the ongoing reevaluation of his monumental oeuvre, which following his passing in 2017 has received renewed attention. The recent special issue *Estranhando a teoria empenhada de Antonio Candido*, to cite an example, sought to bring Brazilian literary theory out of Candido's long shadow, through a systematic critique of many of his works and concepts. On a parallel track, Candido's reception in English has seen a recent surge, especially in discussions on world literature from the point of view of the peripheries of capitalism, such as in Stefan Helgesson's *Decolonisations of literature* (2022) and through the influence of Candido's disciple Roberto Schwarz. However, the revision of Candido's work beyond literary theory and criticism remains underexplored. Anita Moraes makes of *Parceiros* a pivotal point in her argument about the Eurocentric, evolutionary logic of Candido's thinking about culture; and Luiz Carlos Jackson has led important investigations on the intellectual context of Candido's sociology.[1] Their contributions will be noted often below. By turning to the context of Candido's fieldwork and the decisive operation of habitus, this article takes their inquiry a step further and proposes a consideration of Candido's

[1] In fact, Jackson seeks to rescue Candido's sociological work from what he deems its "forgotten" condition and to claim for it a special place in the canon of Brazilian social science. In 1979, Fernando Henrique Cardoso claimed that *Parceiros* "não fez escola" (89), attesting to its poor reception in its own discipline, at least when compared to the influence of Candido's work in literary theory and criticism.

work as representative of how the engagement of Brazilian intellectuals with the countryside was informed by class relations.

The period between Candido's initial fieldwork and the book's publication was marked by political agitation in the countryside. Following the Crash of 1929 and its ripple effects on Brazil's coffee economy, land and rural labor became central issues, during the Estado Novo and in the Republic of 1946. As Cliff Welch has shown, São Paulo was a seedbed of rural labor movements as early as 1924. The 1946 Constitution established the "bem estar social" as a parameter for the use and disposition of property, albeit with little practical effect (Mello 137). Candido's own political activity testifies to this, as between 1947 and 1950 he was one of the editors of the *Folha socialista*, the party newspaper of the Brazilian socialists (then called *Esquerda democrática*), where there are frequent mentions of the plights and struggles of the Brazilian peasantry. In 1947, João Mangabeira, a socialist congressman, was elected *relator* of a special commission on land reform, dedicated to debating the issue in preparation for a vote on the "Lei Agrária" submitted to congress by President Dutra. In March 1948, the national directory of the party asked the state chapters to prepare studies of the agrarian question to support Mangabeira's interventions. Max Gimenes argues Candido might have been influenced by this call in his shift of focus (424).[2]

However, although Candido was motivated by a political concern for the peasantry, his research was always premised on an asymmetrical relationship with the peasants themselves. Candido was not on the farm to organize, support, or educate the workers but to study them. The workers of the Bela Aliança are not treated by Candido as political subjects with whom he might establish a productive partnership but as sociological exempla from whom he might extract the truth of the matter, which only then would be made available for use in a broader reformist project. As I contend below, the way he engages with what the sharecroppers have to say is markedly different from the way he incorporates the contributions and sensibilities of his fazendeiro friends. Throughout *Parceiros*, the sharecroppers of the Bela Aliança are firmly placed in what Michel-Rolph Trouillot called the Savage slot, or the rhetoric archetype through which anthropological discourse

[2] The endpoint of this period is the 1964 coup, which, as Welch highlights, was "a turning point for the rural labor movement in Brazil," although "significant continuities carried over … into the future rural labor movement" (3). The military regime oversaw its own land reform, aimed at breaking down unproductive latifundia rather than at promoting social justice.

filters the observed. In Trouillot's scheme, that archetype is a function of the control anthropological discourse holds over the native voice. The Savage (and its avatars) can be humanized or even heroic but remain subordinate to the logic of the discourse. As Trouillot says, "the Savage is never an interlocutor but evidence in an argument between two Western interlocutors about the possible futures of humankind" (260). To paraphrase Trouillot with the appropriate adjustments, the sharecropper is seldom an interlocutor for Candido but rather evidence in an argument among planters and intellectuals about the possible futures of the Brazilian peasantry.

Such a research attitude is symptomatic of the intellectual milieu in which Candido learned his trade. The first half of the twentieth century was the defining period for what Nísia Trindade Lima called the sociological utopia of Brazilian social scientists, whose academic pursuits sought to supply actual or envisioned state projects with the knowledge of local realities. That utopia was embedded in a longer project of nation-building premised on the incorporation of territory and populations, which made rural areas and the interior a central concern. Fernando de Azevedo, who was Candido's advisor, and Emilio Willems, who taught important seminars Candido attended, were invested in educational reform and tutoring by the state as paths for the modernization of the Brazilian interior. Azevedo and Willems were central figures of *sanitarista* thought in São Paulo. Both tried to depart from racial explanations of sociological phenomena, while maintaining miserabilist descriptions of rural life that justified the demands for strong state intervention (Lima 133–54). In Candido's work, this tendency is better exemplified by his depiction of traditional *caipira* culture as characterized by minimal levels of social and material conditions, nearing malnutrition and anomie. Anita Moraes has argued that such an account is premised on the Eurocentric and evolutionary logic that pervades much of Candido's thinking about culture. In Candido's own words, "o caipira é condenado à urbanização" (*Parceiros* 258), which for him meant integration into the larger national society organized around urban centers. Pointedly, he did not see land reform as a path for the renovation of rural life in its own terms, but as a way of easing the transition into the order driven by the cities.

Where Azevedo and Willems's approach of educational intervention amounted to a demand to take the *caipira* poor out of their culture and way of life, the scholars of folk culture leaned into culture both to preserve it and to use it as a tool of sociological interpretation and social reform. Roger Bastide, the main representative of this tendency, was assisted by Candido and Gilda de Mello e Souza on research trips in the São Paulo interior, including many short trips related to the research on the *cururu*, in the period between 1947 and 1953. For Bastide, as Luiz Carlos Jackson contends, "a análise sociológica da cultura … permitiria … plasmar formas de resistência ao processo de modernização" (*Tradição* 146). While Bastide's outlook combined sociological theory and methods with the study of folklore, the folklorists themselves performed extensive collections of folk tales, songs, and practices. Candido draws on the work of one of them, Cornélio Pires, while seeking to correct some of its idealizations about traditional *caipira* life. He thus continues Bastide's project of submitting folklore studies to a social scientific critique, with an eye to using its results in the service of social reform.

Although folk culture occupies different roles in the theories of Candido's teachers, they all conceive it as a site of political intervention facilitated by the mediation of social science. Candido squares his formative influences by turning culture into an overarching stance of explanation that indexes material conditions and social mores into the generative engine of a way of life. Although Candido never explicitly defines culture, throughout *Parceiros* the word is mainly used to refer to the sum of social organization and technical apparatus—"sociabilidade e equipamento material" (31)—that allows a human group to produce and reproduce their life. Culture, in this sense, is the local solution to the general problem of human society's relationship with the milieu. This conception is explicitly indebted to part 1 of Marx's *The German Ideology*, but also to Malinowski's functionalism and to D. M. Goodfellow's economic sociology, all of which Candido quotes. It defines therefore the central "problema dos meios de vida" that Candido is trying to address.

However, his loose definition of culture often slips into parallel meanings, inclusive of values, rituals, attitudes, and symbolic objects and practices such as the *cururu*. In this slippage, culture loses its close ties to the material conditions of life and becomes a much broader term, able to include different social types. As Anita Moraes has shown, Candido believed that folklore—"a atividade artística do homem primitivo e do homem rústico"—was so integrated in social reality that it could not be understood disconnected from it—unlike the literature of "sociedades civilizadas," which is able to change context and retain its "integridade estética" ("Estímulos" 52). Because of this position, Candido effaces the gap between the folkloric dimension of culture and its material basis. Paradoxically, it is this complete identification between the material basis and *caipira* culture that ends up obscuring the specificity of the condition of the landless sharecropper. *Caipira* culture, although defined by "mínimos," encompasses not only the poor and landless but all who share its cultural heritage, which includes the landed and well-to-do.[3]

This issue was composed by what Candido depicts as the nostalgia of his informants for the "before times," a golden age when they all had land and slaves—when they were, in sum, fazendeiros. In Candido's paraphrase of what he heard, in those times "ninguém trabalhava alugado, porque para isso havia os cativos [the enslaved]; não havia *aforante* [sharecropper] nem *colônio* [tenant farmer]: era o 'tempo das posse' e todos tinham a sua terra. Era só chegar, tomar conta e pedir para o governo, que concedia áreas medindo uma légua de frente por três de fundo" (*Parceiros* 226). These rosy memories were rooted in the family histories of the sharecroppers Candido interviewed: "todos eles são antigos proprietários ou, na maior parte, descendentes de sitiantes e fazendeiros, donos de engenhocas e moinhos, de carros e de gado. Originaram-se, pois, das camadas estáveis da velha sociedade caipira.… Lembram que o avô teve sítio grande, até escravos" (220). With time, "as terras passaram a outras mãos de modo pouco claro," leading to the present situation in which they worked as sharecroppers in increasingly precarious conditions. These conditions in turn push the impoverished *caipira* to emigrate and seek new areas—where land will be free or cheap—to occupy: "no Paraná, na Alta Sorocabana, até no Mato Grosso," in sum, into the new frontiers of the agrarian occupation of the land (227).

Candido internalizes—not without caveats—this notion that the *caipira* type includes in posse the type of the fazendeiro, either as lost past or potential future. The fazendeiro becomes part of the historical cycle of migration, colonization, and decadence that characterizes *caipira* life. This cycle is akin to the archetype of adventure, which Candido inherits from the *historiografia bandeirante* of the previous generation. This narrative, drawn from the works of Alfredo Ellis Jr. and Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, ties *caipira* life to the expansionist logic of the

[3] The 1965 article "Estímulos da criação literária" is one of the few published texts to incorporate Candido's research on the *cururu*, together with a 1956 article speculating about the "possíveis raízes indígenas" of the dance. His use of "primitivo" and "rústico" in the quote expresses the evolutive conception of culture described by Moraes, which Candido inherits from Willems and Robert Redfield.

colonial frontier. Candido thanks Buarque de Holanda, especially, for his ecological and technological perspective on the adjustment of the Portuguese to the milieu in the colonial history of São Paulo, "ao ritmo da fusão de raças e culturas" (*Parceiros* 14), as presented in *Monções* (1945) and "Índios e mamelucos na expansão paulista" (1949). Around the same time, USP geographer Pierre Monbeig was considering the dynamics of population and frontier expansion in São Paulo and characterized the Paulista economy as essentially propelled by "the existence of new zones" to occupy (11). In 1946, Monbeig advised Nice Lecoq Muller's dissertation, *Sítios e sitiantes no Estado de São Paulo*, from which Candido borrowed his central concept of *bairro*, which condensed Candido's account of the *caipira*'s social organization and material conditions.

In his account, Candido sought to determine "quais as unidades mínimas de vida econômica e social" for the *caipira*, "em que as relações encontram um primeiro ponto de referência" (*Parceiros* 25). His answer to that inquiry was the *bairro*, which he calls the "'solução característica' da vida tradicional do caipira paulista" (247). The *bairro* describes a group of families working on contiguous lands connected by occasional exchanges and collaborations, particularly in the context of religious festivities and the *mutirão*, a get-together in which the tasks that demanded labor power beyond what a single family could provide were undertaken collectively, with the promise of drinking and partying at the denouement. This community offered a degree of stability to *caipira* life that counteracted, to a certain extent, the centrifugal forces that forced migration—fragile tenure of land, personal vendettas, and the threat of violence from the state and large landowners.

Thus, the concept of *bairro* epitomized the two constitutive tensions of *Parceiros*. On the one hand, it linked the way of life of the *caipira* poor—their "culture"—to the historical activity of the *bandeirantes*, which in the previous decades had been ideologically instrumentalized by the São Paulo elite, as shown by Barbara Weinstein. Through the slippage between local material conditions and general cultural community allowed by Candido's framework, the impoverished *caipira* sharecropper and the prideful *fazendeiro bandeirante* became different moments in the life of a family or even an individual, rather than social types with diverging interests. On the other hand, the bairro also provided a scale of analysis that elided the relationship between its members and the owners of the land in which they lived. Whatever the uses of the concept in other hands, in Candido's work the focus on the *bairro* left little space for the consideration of class struggle. Since the *bairro* was defined by the horizontal cooperation of relatively homogeneous families, with small internal inequalities that did not resolve into class difference, this emphasis did not demand a consideration of, for example, the relationship between the families of the *bairro* and the fazendeiro on whose land they toiled. The main struggle depicted in Candido's book is that between the *caipira* community and the urban-centered national order, which the title of the conclusion—"O caipira em face da civilização urbana"—attests.

If such a genealogy of his concepts and structuring ideas supports the critique of Candido's sociology, whose declared motives are unsettled by underlying assumptions and unresolved contradictions, I propose to take a step further, into the conditions of the fieldwork that occasioned *Os parceiros do Rio Bonito*. As Ian Merkel has remarked in his book on the exchanges between French and Brazilian intellectuals at USP, "intellectual works … are always a collective undertaking inseparable from place and social relations" (4). Although the place he refers to here is USP and the relations are between its intellectuals, we can broaden its meaning to include other places and forms of sociability. In the case of Candido, the intellectual and political milieus that shaped his thought were also inflected by his relations to his peers in the landowning class, on one side, and to the landless rural worker, on the other. Those relations played out against the backdrop of the Fazenda Bela Aliança. Far from being one site among others, perfectly fungible in the sociologist's quest for informants, the Paulista plantation constitutes a setting that defined Candido's fieldwork, and against which his text must be read. The fazenda sets the stage for the performance of the sociologist who, no stranger to the world of fazendeiros, cannot help but return to the script of its habitus—in Bourdieu's words "a system of *dispositions*, that is of permanent manners of being, seeing, acting and thinking, or a system of *long-lasting* (rather than permanent) schemes or schemata or structures of perception, conception and action" ("Habitus" 43).[4] With words that echo Bourdieu's definition, Candido will attribute to his landowning friends the "modo de ver e de sentir" (*Parceiros* 15) that shaped his research. In the field at the Fazenda Bela Aliança, he observed the *caipira* sharecroppers with the eyes of the planters in whose land they toiled.

[4] Bourdieu's conceptualization of habitus aims to counterbalance what he calls the "illusion of purposiveness" or individual intention (*Habitus and Field* 65). It illuminates how stated intents (such as Candido's political ambitions) can be undercut by habits of mind and behavior.

At the Fazenda Bela Aliança

In the acknowledgments in Candido's preface to *Parceiros* we find the first evidence of how the sharecroppers participate in his project. After recognizing the influence of a number of intellectual sources, he turns to the people he is indebted to, both in the field and at the university. When addressing "alguns dos caipiras que formam a base do meu estudo," he thanks them "pelo material fornecido em entrevistas e, *mais ainda*, pelo que *involuntariamente* forneceram, como *objeto* de investigação" (15; my emphases). Here, Candido emphasizes his own deliberate, conscious observation over their unconscious behaviors, thus curtailing their agency as participants in the study. Although he characterizes them as polite, selfless, patient, honest illiterates of sharp intelligence, the *caipiras*' perspectives are, as a rule, excluded from the analysis. With the shift away from *cururu*, this whole dimension of *caipira* life and culture was removed from the picture, and references to the *caipira*'s own notions and self-conception almost disappear, with but a few exceptions. This point is made even more evident in contrast with his addresses to the fazendeiros in the acknowledgments: he thanks "meu fraternal companheiro" Edgard Carone for hosting him in Bofete and for "sua experiência agrícola, o seu conhecimento da região, a sua cultura histórica, a sua excelente brasiliana" (14); and "o velho amigo" Pio Lourenço Corrêa, "admirável tipo de fazendeiro paulista." In both cases, their perspective is welcomed and their contribution, voluntary and intellectualized, assimilated. They are presented almost as coauthors, especially of the first part, which recounts the history of *caipira* culture to establish the basis upon which Candido's subsequent analyses will develop.

Candido's description of Pio Lourenço Corrêa, in particular, portrays him not only as an elder erudite but as a living remnant of the colonial past: "Quando ele desenterrava das recordações de setuagenário o que lhe contara na infância um velho pai setuagenário, parecia-me tocar no vivo o século XVIII de Araritaguaba, onde sua avó falava língua geral e cuja tradição ele mantinha, na escarpada austeridade do seu caráter" (15). The mention of the *língua geral* here alludes to Indigenous ancestry—which in the colonial frontier generally happened through matrilineal kinship premised on colonial violence. This eulogy to the prototype of the Paulista planter establishes Corrêa as a key reference and interlocutor. Corrêa's contribution is not only material—Candido stayed with him as well as with

Carone—but of perspective. While Candido describes Carone's contribution as a "verdadeira colaboração," Côrrea's is a full-fledged imprint of sensibility: having acknowledged Corrêa's offerings via his knowledge of dialect, fauna and flora, agrarian technique, and rural customs and manners, Candido says: "devo-lhe mais do que poderia registrar, porque são coisas que se incorporam ao *modo de ver e de sentir*" (15; my emphasis).

The seignorial way of seeing and feeling that Candido owed to Corrêa fits into a larger pattern of patriarchal intellectual affect. As we have seen, Candido followed Bastide in his critical approach to the scholarship of folklore produced by previous generations. However, *Parceiros* still retains some of the essayistic, broad affect of the classics of social thought from that period. Luiz Carlos Jackson claims the book "recovers the tradition" of Brazilian thought that the disciplinary training at USP was attempting to deconstruct. That tradition was held up by the enlightened descendants of rural patriarchies, some of whom—Freyre, Prado Jr., Buarque de Holanda, who published their "great works" in the 1930s and early 1940s, outside of the university's system of disciplines and "censorship"—had an enormous influence on Candido's and subsequent generations. Therefore, while Candido was invested in USP's intellectual project, and in spite of the academic seriousness of *Parceiros*, the preface's emblematic characterization of Pio Lourenço Corrêa demonstrates how a certain nostalgia for the expansive unfettered thinking of the lettered patriarch remains in the work, contrapositioned against the reductionism of method.[5]

The seignorial attitude is especially evident in Candido's claim of association with *caipira* culture, which dispelled any mystery *caipira* life might offer to him:

> Somando essas estadas [na Fazenda Bela Aliança] com as pequenas que fiz durante anos, digamos que não cheguei a ficar 150 dias no campo. É pouco? Os antropólogos que líamos ficavam muito mais, como Malinowski, que se não me engano viveu dois anos com os trobriandeses. Mas é completamente diferente: ele não era trobriandês e eu sou brasileiro, não precisava aprender a

[5] In addition to his contribution to *Parceiros*, Corrêa was also the owner of the fazenda where Mário de Andrade wrote *Macunaíma*, making him an essential and overlooked contributor to not one but two Brazilian classics. Corrêa was Mário and Gilda de Mello e Souza's relative. Mello e Souza and Candido together edited the volume with the letters between Mário and Corrêa, *Pio & Mário: Diálogo da vida inteira* (2009).

> língua nem quebrar a cabeça para perceber o que via, inclusive porque pertenço a uma família de fazendeiros do Sudoeste de Minas, na fronteira de São Paulo, e fui criado em área caipira, assistindo à Folia de Reis, terço em capela, leilão de prendas, procissão, mutirão, etc. Fui até rei de pastores nas festas de natal em 1927. (qtd. Jackson, *Tradição* 269)

In this testimony, offered in an interview to Jackson in 1996, Candido makes a triple identity claim: that of nationality ("brasileiro"), class ("família de fazendeiros"), and regional identity ("área caipira"). He also advances his participation in popular festivities as evidence of a shared identity. Although he does not claim to be *caipira*, this testimony evidences the slippery meaning of the term for him—sometimes restricted to the landless poor and sometimes encompassing a broader cultural heritage. Candido was aware of the challenge of representing the life of the *parceiros*. In a note on his field notebook, he writes: "assinalar o problema do caipira como representação: o caipira visto pelo homem da cidade" (*Parceiros* 170). But this issue did not end up in the work, and even then, the disjunction is imagined in that note as geographic (country and city), and not of class or even culture in a sense that would oppose their perspectives. Moreover, Candido's claim was one of belonging: not that he belonged to the *caipira* community per se, but that the *caipira* heritage also belonged to him.

Such a proprietary claim resonates with the method used by Candido in much of his sociological writing. If his fieldwork was made possible by his class connections, Candido's perspective on his subject was informed by a highly personal relationship to the material. His sociological work is fundamentally marked by access to certain archives and experiences that often make it come closer to a form of autoethnography that dare not speak its name. In "The Brazilian Family," an article published in English in the US in 1951, Candido furnishes his characterizations of the Brazilian family with anecdotes found in both the historical record and his personal experience. For example, when discussing the "practically unlimited" nature of paternal authority, he recounts that "in Minas Gerais, as late as the twentieth century, when one young couple ran away to get married against the wishes of the girl's family, the parents and grandparents of the bride ordered pursuit and after the couple were caught the youth was beaten so badly that he was crippled for life" ("The Brazilian Family" 295). He then adds a note, saying, "In this, as in other examples, the writer does not give the identity of the persons involved." Many accounts of this type, usually having occurred in Minas Gerais, are presented throughout the article. In the much later work *Um funcionário da monarquia* (completed in 1985 but published in 2002), Candido writes the biography of a bureaucrat of the Second Empire, Antonio Nicolau Tolentino, who happened to be his great-grandfather. As in the early article, but this time explicitly, Candido builds his narrative with the help of a personal archive.[6]

Edgard Carone's own writing on the Bela Aliança offers a useful point of comparison. In 1991, he published *Memória da Fazenda Bela Aliança*, a brief history of the estate his family owned and of his experiences in it. As a historian, Carone performed archival work to understand the history of the estate before he took over. As the owner and manager in the intervening years, he registered the minutiae of life on the farm for posterity. In both Candido and Carone, the coexistence of familial intimacy and the scientific gaze conditions the register in which their appreciation of rural working life takes place. Although written decades apart and under very different circumstances, their works are mutually illuminating when read side by side. Carone helps fill up the silences of Candido's work and vice versa. Carone presents *Parceiros* as a companion for his work, in his words "simplesmente um livro de memórias [relacionado] com a vivência que tive na Fazenda Bela Aliança por doze anos—1948–1960—, o que vi e ouvi sobre ela. O trabalho não tem outra pretensão; se alguém quiser aprofundar a análise, deve ir buscar a explicação sociológica no fundamental *Parceiros do Rio Bonito*" (13). One passage from Carone, in particular, helps bring into focus the fundamental instability of Candido's work. In it, Carone addresses the fact that the families living on his farm did not stay there for long. He asks himself why that might be:

> Há famílias que moraram mais de dez anos na fazenda, mas isto é exceção. O caipira não tem o *hábito* de se fixar muito tempo no mesmo lugar, *preferindo* buscar sempre novos horizontes, novas terras. Seria sinal de insegurança, de falta de acomodação entre

[6] He still avoids a direct identification, however, not mentioning the kinship in the text itself and referring to his informants (his extended family) by the generic and mysterious "descendentes." When explaining in an interview why he wrote the biography, Candido distances himself from Tolentino, calling him his mother's grandfather rather than "bisavô": "O conselheiro Tolentino é avô de minha mãe, de modo que desde menino ouvi falar dele" ("O segundo império").

> *sua cultura, seus valores*, e as pequenas exigências de uma sociedade que começa a dar sinais mínimos de mudança? (111; my emphases)

In other words, Carone identifies the *caipira*'s own "cultura e valores" as the source of his mobility. It is the outcome of a choice born not of material circumstances (defined here by the generic "change") but of a cultural drive to leave and rebuild a home elsewhere. He is quiet about how class tensions or the material conditions might be a factor in this movement. In doing so, he collapses into a one-dimensional account of causality what in *Parceiros* is a much more fraught—but no less contradictory—account of *caipira* life.

Like Carone, Candido locates in culture the source of the *caipira*'s way of life, even if his use of culture seeks to incorporate material dimensions. Although his investigation concerns sharecroppers, the whole framing of the work is that of culture or traditional life. His own definition of the sharecroppers (*parceiros* or *aforantes*) is fairly technical and corresponds to a category in the taxonomy of land tenure in the area, which proceeds from the "moradores permanentes" of small and large properties (*sitiantes* in the first case, *fazendeiros* in the second) to the "moradores transitórios," or landless workers occupying land to different degrees of legality. The legal occupation of someone else's land takes various forms, according to the mutual responsibilities of each part and the nature of the exchange (money, labor, and/or a quota of the crops). The sharecroppers of the Fazenda Bela Aliança worked under the most autonomous regime, contributing only 20 percent of their output but performing all of the work, and occasionally being called to "trabalhar gratuitamente em tarefas de benefício coletivo" (Carone 89). Other types of legal occupant were the *colono* (who payed rent) and the *camarada* (who got a monthly salary to work for the fazenda).

Candido sketches this rich landscape but uses only the sharecroppers of the Fazenda Bela Aliança as the basis of his interpretation of the "caipira paulista." The *parceiros* come to stand for *caipira* culture, which in turn offers the basis for the explanation of the behavior of the *parceiros*. This circular logic muddles the picture of crisis emerging from the work, at once a crisis of economic subsistence (related to the rising prices of commodities that they have no money to buy but still depend on as autonomous farmers) and a crisis of values (as their traditional sociability ceases to respond successfully to the new conditions). As he says in his conclusion, “Os elementos de que dispõe a cultura tradicional [do caipira] são insuficientes para garantir-lhe a integração satisfatória à nova ordem de coisas” (*Parceiros* 257). This crisis of values has gender (the sexual division of labor) and religious (the penetration of evangelicalism in the interior) aspects that Candido alludes to but does not pursue. On the other hand, it also keeps out of focus the metamorphoses of culture outside of that specific labor arrangement, and the metamorphoses of labor beyond this (cultural) community.

Part of the justification for treating the *parceiros* as a prototype of the *caipira* is what Candido perceives as a flattening of class difference in the area. Landed and landless are horizontalized, and even the larger landowners are seen as part of the same collectivity. Candido’s account of this horizontalization is based on his observation of behavior and custom:

Para o observador, a parte mais característica é a massa de pequenos proprietários e parceiros, quase sempre nivelados pelo tipo de atividade, os recursos econômicos e o gênero de vida. Note-se porém que, ressalvada a diferença econômica, é muito menor do que noutras partes a distância entre eles e a maioria dos fazendeiros, no que se refere ao teor geral da vida. É frequente vê-los em pé de quase igualdade nas festas, nos passeios, nas conversas da vila, na faina da lavoura. Não se configura de modo algum o tipo senhorial, extinto com a passagem do café. (125)

The landless, small-landed farmers, and large landowners are all brought together by the absence (if we believe the observer) of an observable sense of distinction in their daily life and interpersonal relations. On the other hand, in his conclusion, Candido affirms in no uncertain terms that the *caipira*’s capacity of adjustment to new economic conditions is directly proportional to his ownership of land and the size of his holdings, such adjustment being “mais satisfatório no sitiante médio, precário no parceiro, mais ainda no colono e no camarada, podendo dar lugar à decadência e à plena miséria” (249). What in one sense (cultural) is an absence of distinction, in another (material) is a factor of central consequence for life.

This instability is not resolved by Candido in *Parceiros*, but rather lends to the work its constitutive tension. The class composition of the peasantry was an important topic in rural sociology at the time. Earlier interpreters of Brazilian rural spaces, like Gilberto Freyre and Oliveira Vianna, advanced a strict binary division of the rural population between aristocratic landowners and the toiling masses of enslaved and free workers. Maria Pereira de Queiroz contends that it was in folklore and literary works that the rural "middle classes" were most often figured, until the social sciences started to pay attention to this complex social landscape. Candido attributed this sociological turn for his own generation, citing the examples of sociologists like himself, who focused on the "classes humildes" or "dominadas":

A importância da [Escola de] Sociologia e Política e da Faculdade [de Filosofia, Ciências e Letras] foi deslocar a sociologia brasileira das classes dominantes para as classes dominadas. Os grandes nomes da sociologia brasileira eram Gilberto Freyre e Oliveira Vianna, que estudavam as classes dominantes, na perspectiva da história. A realidade imediata do Brasil contemporâneo foi estudada pela Escola de Sociologia e pela Faculdade em suas camadas humildes. Samuel Lowrie fez a pesquisa sobre o lixeiro; Gioconda Mussolini estudou os caiçaras; eu estudei o parceiro rural; Egon Schaden, o índio destribalizado; Florestan, o negro. Por assim dizer, nós radicalizamos a sociologia brasileira. (qtd. in Jackson, *Tradição* 294)

Candido's claim here has two aspects that corroborate my developing argument: first, his loose definition of the "camadas humildes," which brings together heterogeneous categories defined alternatively by ethnic, professional, cultural, and income characteristics; second, the assumption that paying attention to a subaltern group amounts to a form of radicalism. Candido's use of "radical," here and elsewhere, explicitly refers not to political but rather to intellectual attitudes. In another interview with Jackson, Candido expressed, "No Brasil, no meu tempo, não havia [bons pensadores de esquerda]. Os intelectuais do partido comunista eram papagaios que repetiam os catecismos soviéticos.… Aos poucos fui observando o seguinte: o pensamento conservador brasileiro apresentava frequentemente facetas radicais. Um conservador como Gilberto Freyre, por exemplo, de repente exercia um papel radical acentuado na medida em que chamava atenção para o negro. Esta é uma atitude radical" (Jackson, *Tradição* 259). Therefore, Candido's self-identification as radical sociologist, defined by the attention to the "camadas humildes," had nothing to do with political positions or attitudes. The "radical" label amounts to an oxymoronic "radicalismo de 'classe média'" connected to USP, as observed by Carlos Guilherme Mota (126).

Such middle-class radicalism reflects not only an intellectual attitude marked by class but also the conditions for political intervention in the countryside. Francisco de Oliveira, in a brief review of a later edition of Candido's book, draws attention to the "largo e fundo consenso entre as classes sociais no campo brasileiro, entre o minifundista e o latifundiário, base da arraigada permanência da forma de dominação, reatualizada agora pelo 'agrobusiness.'" What he sees as consensus—called elsewhere in the text "estranha parceria"—is seen by Cliff Welch, in his history of the rural labor movement in São Paulo, as a sort of ideological obscurity: "the difficulty of defining who was a rural worker complicated activism and hence the historical record" (8) since each group (wage earners, tenant farmers, sharecroppers) had different interests. Moreover, the inclusion of landowners in the shared community of *caipiras* added further to the conflict.

Oliveira sees culture as the basis for the formation of his diagnosed consensus. He thus commends Candido for centering it while at the same time noting the blind spot in the shape of Edgard Carone. With charity, he seems to suggest Candido was consciously articulating a muted explanation for "class consensus"—rather than, unconsciously or not, providing a rationale for its reproduction: "Não é estranha à sutileza de Antonio Candido que o dono da fazenda fosse seu amigo, Edgar Carone. É difícil ver num amigo o latifundiário empedernido, figura central da saga do atraso agrário brasileiro. Mas, com olhos de ver, certamente está lá a pista para investigar-se a estranha parceria, se quisermos chamá-la assim, entre dominantes e dominados no campo, que financiou as bases da industrialização brasileira." In my estimation, *Parceiros*, rather than referring to culture to explain class consensus, reproduces such consensus through the mystification of culture. Its characterization of *caipira* culture, marked by the flattening of class distinction and the potential of social mobility, portrays the fazendeiro as simply one end of the *caipira* continuum, and thus one of the internal vectors of *caipira* culture. As Candido states in the conclusion:

Na história da sociedade rural de São Paulo, há deslocamento constante de indivíduos e famílias, não só no espaço geográfico, como na pirâmide social. Da vida de bairro, desprendiam-se por ascensão (passando à esfera do fazendeiro) ou por descida (engrossando o número dos desqualificados); mas a cada momento os seus descendentes se reintegram nela, por decadência, ou acesso. (247)

In this passage, not only is every *caipira* virtually a fazendeiro, but actual fazendeiros were already in a similar position to the *parceiros*. And not only because of the absence of class distinctions (as seen above), but because their plights mirrored each other, as they appear equally ineffectual in the face of larger socioeconomic trends. In Candido's account, the very institution of the *parceria* represents a "compromisso" between the "grande ou médio proprietário que não tem meios de explorar diretamente as suas terras e o trabalhador rural que não deseja tornar-se assalariado. Para ambos, é nitidamente uma situação de transição." This situation is mutually unsatisfactory, as it "não permite ao fazendeiro a agricultura moderna e em larga escala; nem permite ao trabalhador a prosperidade mínima, que se traduz em estabilidade por meio da aquisição de terras" (*Parceiros* 217). Once again, class difference is attenuated, as the landowner is "financeiramente insuficiente" and the sharecropper is a "ex-proprietário, obrigado a lavrar o chão alheio" (217).

In the conclusion, Candido refers to this dynamic to advocate for land reform, as the "incapacidade econômica, técnica, ou administrativa do latifundiário" hindered his ability to develop a productive estate, and therefore the "latifúndio não se justifica pela utilidade pública (pois a sua produtividade é mínima) nem privada (pois não proporciona ao proprietário senão pequena parcela do que poderia render) [e ainda] priva da posse da terra os seus cultivadores, que graças a ela poderiam adquirir estabilidade" (258). However, he immediately qualifies this assertion, referring to the "latifúndio *improdutivo*" and the "latifúndio *sem plano de produção* e *sem iniciativa adequada* do proprietário" (258; my emphases) as obstacles to economic development and population stability—conceding to the *productive* estate and that with *adequate* entrepreneurship their claim to existence.

Conclusion

While in *Parceiros* Candido does advocate for land reform, he also articulates a justification for class consensus through the use of culture as equalizer. He gestures forward to the improvement of the living conditions of *caipiras*, and backward to a nostalgic view of the colonial development of frontier cultures in São Paulo. In the capital of the state, political debates about land reform, academic discussions around folklore and social science, and the ideological celebration of the *bandeirante* identity shaped his thinking about the relationship between culture and the material conditions of life of the rural poor. In Bofete, his close friend's estate provided a stage for his performance as sociologist. The resulting work, *Os parceiros do Rio Bonito*, testifies to the unresolved tensions that shaped it. Addressing these tensions shines a light on the class politics of sociological research and social thinking in Brazil in the mid-twentieth century. It also invites new inquiries into Candido's sociology.

Although Candido's canonical status is owed in the first place to his approach to literary theory and criticism, his sociology is the incontrovertible backbone of his criticism, a fact that has started to receive more attention in recent years. Anita Moraes made of *Parceiros* a pivotal point in her argument about Candido's cultural outlook, while Luiz Carlos Jackson considers *Parceiros* on the same ground as *Formação da literatura brasileira* (1959) in his account of Candido as "intérprete do Brasil." By centering Candido's sociological work, this article showed how Candido combined progressive political ambitions with a conservative cultural outlook connected to his class habitus. This analysis of Candido's treatment of class and culture in *Parceiros* does not intend to exhaust the possibilities of reading this work's contributions to rural sociology in Brazil. It seeks to recenter it under critical lenses, pondering its contribution to the ongoing reevaluation of Candido's oeuvre. In particular, it opens the space for further questions about the intersection of class identity, progressive politics, and conservative cultural views in the work of the Paulista critic.

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