



THE JOSUÉ OF EACH ONE...

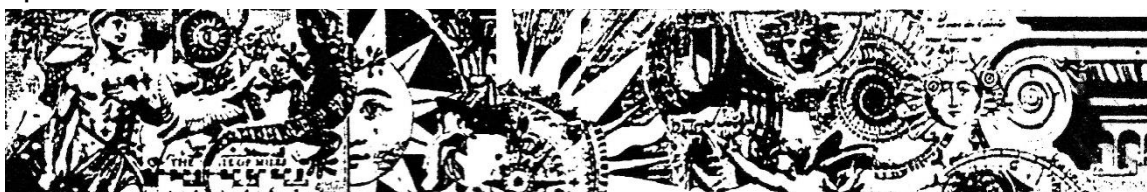
THE JOSUÉ OF ALL OF US...

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Recebido em: 07/02/2022

Aprovado em: 04/06/2022



I must start by saying that A World without hunger has been excellent company these last few weeks. The book offers a meticulously researched and sensitive narrative on the life of Brazilian intellectual, Josué de Castro. Titled "The Josué of each of us... and the Josué of all of us," my speech aimed to emphasize two important facets of Archie Davies' work. Firstly, it enriches the historiography of geography with its insightful contributions. Secondly, it stimulates a meaningful conversation about the engagement of geographers in global social justice. As pointed out in the book's introduction:

"If this book is part of an effort to put Castro's work into closer articulation with anglophone geography, it is above all his straightforward, urgent, unceasing political commitment to creating a world without hunger that remains the most inspiring, and most challenging, of his legacies" (Davies, 2022, p.5)

"O Josué de cada um" highlights the life writing methodology presented in the book. I can see "o Josué de Davies", Davie's Josué. And I like him. He is an international intellectual ahead of his time, whose ideas and body crossed disciplinary, linguistic, social, political and cultural boundaries to deal with geographical topics that so dramatically marked his time, life and relationship with space.

To build his *Josué*, Archie navigated through many geographically dispersed archives and publishing. As *Josué*, Archie also crossed disciplinary, linguistic, social, political and cultural boundaries to show us the many open possibilities that lie in the situated messiness of *Josué* biography. In doing so, the life written is deeply connected to the life that writes. The contemporary multilingual white British progressive geographer encounters the multilingual black Brazilian progressive geographer from the past.

However, this encounter happens through a historiographical perspective that welcomes the incomplete, the confusing, and the unexpected. A methodology in which the creative element is mandatory in the writing of history, and every narrative is constituted by its counter-narrative.

In writing the biography of a central character in Brazilian geography, Davies illuminates some paths we in Brazil have been following in making geography histories. Although histories of geography in Brazil have been increasingly focusing on life writings, there is still some primacy of publishing, over archiving, as the main source. Investigations on life trajectories have focused more on the author's textual world, favouring analyses of the published outputs, the polished thinking that hides the comings and goings, and the failures and successes of the erratic trajectories of researchers in their practices.

Perhaps the fear of dealing with gaps or, as Davies (2022, p. 14) said, finding “threads [that] when pulled come apart in your hands” may explain the privilege of publishing over archiving. Archie's book is an invitation to engage more on the messed-up archives, with its “miscellaneous” folders full of tantalising possibilities and unexpected connections (Davies, 2022, p.14).

In writing the life history of a character so familiar to us and of whom we think we already know everything about; Archie shows that no single path will lead us to the ultimate and definitive narrative about *Josué*. Moreover, and thankfully, it is not our task as historians of geography to produce what could be some undisputed account of geographies from the past.

Our task, more pleasurable yet more challenging, is to be able to try different paths through the corridors of the archives, to falter in front of a shelves crossroads, to stop and go back when faced with a dead-end route of a folder that does not open. Through an attentive and reflexive archival practice and inspired by the fruitful possibilities of critical fabulation, Davies reveals the story he chose to tell about *Josué*—

that of a global thinker who still has much to say for geographers and women geographers today. That is the “Josué de todos nós”. The fundamental argument Archie supports is that getting in contact with Josué trajectory could prompt – and here I quote Clive Barnett (1995, p. 417) – “a sort of radical transformative intervention in the contemporary formation of the discipline”. I believe this is the driving force of Davies's enterprise, to convince us of the urgency of Josué claims.

Moreover, Davies believes that a proto-regional-political ecology can be found in Josué texts and praxis, and showing no fear of a revisionist modality of history, Davies explores Josué's engagement in the political implication of nutrition and his crusade to show the world that hunger is a product of the sociospatial process and the historical geography of colonialism. Josué's ideas on the Brazilian Northeast, the arte-fact region, which synthesises the structural power relations from the colonial experience to the imperialist expansion of capitalism in the country, are put in dialogue with political ecology and contemporary geography critical thinking. And I must say that we all benefit from this dialogue!

The mobile nature of Josué and his ideas, his ability and strong agency regarding the translation and world circulation of his publishing, reinforce Archie's argument. We are not facing the discovery of an original thought hidden in the mud of the global south. We are facing a transnational thought that became loud because both Josué and Archie recognised the strategic implication of the transit of ideas and multilingualism.

Upon finishing the book, I found myself pondering a few questions that I would like to discuss. Davies' approach to chronicling the life and ideas of Josué de Castro was both intriguing and deliberate, as he chose to organize the narrative by geographic scales. This provided a unique and interwoven perspective that added to the overall fascination of the work.

Davies begins the character's arc with his first publications and his performance on a national scale in the field of nutritional debate, but with clear reference to the political aspects of his themes and Josué's international ambition. In the second period, the book emphasizes the planetary scale, focusing on Josué's performance in international politics and deeply engaged in the translation and dissemination of his texts and books. In the third period, the exhaustion of Josué's international efforts guides him to his native geography on a regional scale that will encompass his national and international practices as a political ecologist, as Davies suggests.

In the last two periods of his chronology, Davies completes the character's arc: Josué is back on a global scale, living in exile, but not isolated, once he is deeply connected with national and regional scales, playing his role as a public geographical intellectual and academic located in the anticolonial *milieu*.

In the chronology Davies created, there is the causal device to explain and justify scales shifting in Josué's life. Davies mobilises a series of causes of very different natures, from broad international political issues to causes connected to Josué's personal aspects and affects. For instance, Josué's concerns to internationalise the fight against hunger led him to perform in global institutions. His disappointment with the international political forums pushed him back to his roots in the Brazilian Northeast. The 1964 Brazilian military coup forced him to exile, where a new shift marked his intellectual work.

Davies deliberately and consciously chose not to highlight Josué political party life. Only in chapter 6 the book traces briefly the turbulent Brazilian political scenario that precedes Josué's exile to give us clues about the strategies he undertook to guarantee his intellectual representation.

Josué's political party life is the missing element. Davies explains at the beginning and end of the book why this dimension of Josué's life was left out since your intention was not to build an exhaustive biography but a motivated intellectual biography (Davies, 2022, p.22). And I could not agree more with Davies when he says that Josué's political party life is the subject of another book. I do not intend to question this exclusion or even argue that it could be a problem in Davies's main argument. Which I think is not, indeed.

I just wonder how this exclusion could shake the history you built.

It is possible to frame Josué as part of a national political scenario in the 1950s of intense dispute between the representative power forces of the aristocratic and elite political classes, following what Helder Remigio (2022) points out in his diligent research. In addition to his drive to internationalise the issue of hunger, Josué's appointment to the National Food Commission, which led to his engagement with the FAO, resulted from his strong political support for Getúlio Vargas, a character only briefly mentioned in Davies' book.

This close relationship with Vargas could also explain why Josué did not choose to join the PCB, the Communist Party. However, his circle of affinity was made up of prominent Brazilian communists. Instead, he joined Vargas' party – the PTB, the Labor

Party – and ran for the first time as a federal deputy for Pernambuco in 1950 in a party coalition comprised of conservative sectors and representing right-wing political groups in the Northeast.

In addition to Josué's disappointment with the FAO's technocratic utopianism, his political party life also explains his return to the Northeast to run again in the Brazilian elections as a federal deputy for Pernambuco. He needed to return to bolster his political base in the Northeast. Otherwise, he might not be elected. Josué's political-party life demonstrates his great skill and political astuteness in adjusting to the constant transformations of the Brazilian political scenario to remain alive and active in these political and public arenas. A facet that Davies consciously chooses not to explore. Finally, I reflect on how different the character's arc could be, considering the incorporation of other causal devices connected to Josué's political-partisan life.

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