

GEORGES BALANDIER (1920–2016)

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The man who left us on 5 October 2016 at the age of 95 was one of the last members of a cohort of pioneers who enabled French anthropology to weigh in on the problems of our time. It was made up of young people who were leaving Europe after World War II in disgust at a civilisation – to use the vocabulary of the time – that had lied to them by showing the worst expressions of barbarism hidden under the guise of a “civilising mission.” This brings to mind a celebrated phrase from *Afrique ambiguë*: “I left a society in ruins and this debris seemed reason enough to condemn a civilisation that had once had ‘missionary’ intentions. I aspired to Africa as an experience of rupture, a more crude, more authentic life” (Balandier 1957).

The son of a socialist railwayman, Georges Balandier was born on 21 December 1920 in a small village between Lorraine and Les Vosges. He attended primary school in the suburbs of Paris and secondary school in the city itself, and had just enrolled at the Sorbonne to study for a Bachelor of Arts degree, which included a certificate from the Institut d’Ethnologie,² when the Second World War broke out. To obtain the certificate of ethnology, he had to do a traineeship at the Musée de l’Homme, opened in 1938. In 1942 he was at the museum’s Africa Department under the guidance of Michel Leiris (1901–1984) and

1 I would like to thank Jean Copans for reading and commenting on this paper. Obviously, he is not responsible for its contents.

2 Back then, students enrolled for a degree (*licence*) in literature, law, philosophy, science and so on, studied for four years for certificates awarded by university institutes, such as the Institut de Géographie and Institut d’Ethnologie of Mauss and Rivet (from 1925 on). To earn a certificate, students attended a series of courses and seminars and took a corresponding number of exams. The Institut d’Ethnologie began issuing the certificate of ethnology in 1926 and the certificate of physical anthropology in 1928. Degrees might include one or the other or both. For example, it was while he was studying for a philosophy degree (*licence de philosophie*), for which a science certificate was required, that Jacques Soustelle discovered anthropology. He enrolled for the physical anthropology certificate under Paul Rivet, because “it had a reputation for being easy and I was terrible at maths” (oral account). Students awarded two certificates by the Institut were eligible for a diploma from the Institut d’Ethnologie.

Denise Paulme (1909–1998). In pre-war France, everyone had a relative who had embarked on the colonial adventure. For Balandier, it was the memory of an ancestor who had joined an expedition to Mexico and a photo of an uncle with his foot planted on a gorilla's carcass. Like on other French ethnologists of the time, such as Paul Rivet (1876–1958), Marcel Mauss (1872–1950), Georges-Henri Rivière (1898–1985) or André Schaeffner (1895–1980), but also on younger ones such as Georges Soustelle (1909–1999), Georgette Soustelle (born Fargot, 1909–1999), Jacques Faublée (1912–2002), Denise Paulme, Germaine Tillion (1907–2008) or Marcelle Bouteiller (1904–1990), the swan song of the Empire, the splendid International Colonial Exhibition of 1931, left an impression on him. He thrilled to its exotic air.

The young Balandier was primarily a literary man, a fact reflected in the quality of his writing throughout his life. His first published text, *Lettres sur la poésie*, with a preface by Madeleine Champion (1943), was an exchange of letters between him and a secondary school friend, Paul Mercier (1922–1976), who worked alongside him in the Africa Department for the same reason. The traineeship was paid as they were recruited for a “Chantier de Chômeurs Intellectuels,” a state-sponsored scheme for unemployed graduates launched by the Front Populaire, on which Georges-Henri Rivière had managed to secure places for the museum's staff. However, Balandier's placement was cut short as a result of the introduction of the Compulsory Labour Service (Service du Travail Obligatoire) by the Nazi authorities. Like many others, he refused the draft and joined the Maquis resistance movement in his region, where he lived in 1943–44.

At the end of the war, Balandier rejoined Paulme and Leiris at the museum. After *L'Afrique fantôme* (1934), his first-person account of the Dakar-Djibouti expedition, Michel Leiris had published *L'âge d'homme* (1939) launching his self-writing workshop. Under this influence, Balandier wrote a 236-page autobiographical novel, *Tous comptes faits* (1947), while still managing to complete his degree. Recruited by the Office de la Recherche Scientifique Coloniale, officially established in 1938 (the precursor of the Office de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique Outre-Mer, ORSTOM, now called the Institut de Recherches pour le Développement, IRD), he sailed for Dakar in June 1946.

Balandier was the first of a long line. Between 1947 and 1953, other young people with degrees in geography, including Paul Pélissier (1921–2010) and Gilles Sautter (1920–1998), in literature or law, such as Jacques Lombard (born 1928), Guy Le Moal (1924–2010) and Paul Mercier, as well as demographers, botanists, historians, geologists, and the like were recruited by ORSTOM to build up a body of knowledge on France's overseas territories. Others included Georges Savonnet, André Hauser (1922–1994) and Louis Massé. Several were assigned to the Institut Français d'Afrique Noire (IFAN) run by Théodore Monod (1902–2000) along the same lines as its parent body, the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle. Despite their youth (twenty-five to twenty-seven years old), Monod tasked them with opening branches in each of the French colonies.

After spending time in Mauritania and Dakar, where Balandier began his career and produced *Particularisme et évolution: Les pêcheurs Lébou du Sénégal*, together with Paul Mercier, who joined him in Senegal (*Études Sénégalaises* nr. 3, 1952). Balandier moved to Conakry in 1947, where he set up the local Centrifan and launched the journal *Études guinéennes*, *Bulletin du Centrifan de Conakry*.

The young researcher was looking for a theoretical foundation, which took him five years. Although he published a handful of papers along the lines of a global survey, museographical ethnography left him wanting, and the *Pêcheurs Lébou* was written under the influence of American culturalism, which he reviewed for the periodical *Critique*. Balandier also read *Les Structures élémentaires de la parenté* (1949) written by Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–2009). In 1951, he was the first to present a paper in Lévi-Strauss' seminar at the fifth section of the École Pratique des Hautes Études (Balandier, "Sur certaines coutumes matrimoniales des Fang du Cameroun et du Gabon"). Lévi-Strauss had just been elected to the chair in comparative religion at the EPHE, on which he had succeeded Maurice Leenhardt. But Lévi-Strauss' model did not seem to fit Balandier's observations in the field and the new times were catching up with Africanism, the advent of the *Négritude* movement and its founder poets Aimé Césaire (1913–2008), Léon-Gontran Damas (1912–1978) and Léopold Sédar Senghor (1906–2001). Dating from 1935, this intellectual movement crystallised in the postwar period with the journal *Présence Africaine* (1947), the very first issue of which featured a text by Balandier – "Le

noir est un homme.” In Conakry, the atmosphere of colonial Africa and its clubs, where whites gathered for racist rants, quickly turned Balandier’s stomach and the young man struck up friendships with Guinean political activists.

Bernard Cornut-Gentile (1909–1992) from the Résistance, and close to General Charles de Gaulle (1890–1970), was appointed High Commissioner of French Equatorial Africa (AEF) in 1948. Building on an existing core, he founded in Brazzaville an Institut d’Études Centrafricaines and recruited staff from the Office de la Recherche Coloniale. They were tasked with conducting applied research on contemporary issues. Prompted by the visit to Guinea of the ethno-demographic expedition to French West Africa, led by dr. Léon Pales (1905–1988) and directed by the Musée de l’Homme, Balandier moved to Brazzaville – and the ethnographer or ethnologist became a sociologist. After producing several preliminary studies (with J. C. Pauvert: *Les villages gabonais*. Montpellier: Institut d’Études Centrafricaines, 1952; and *Problèmes économiques et problèmes politiques au niveau du village Fang*. Brazzaville: IEC, 1949), Balandier was tasked with studying the emergence and the development of the capital, Brazzaville. His work was part of a wider research programme which saw Jean-Paul Lebeuf report on Fort Lamy (*Fort-Lamy, Tchad*, 1951), while Paul Mercier was responsible for Dakar, and others conducted research in Lomé, Cotonou and even Papeete. Balandier then produced several reports on urban settlements, paving the way for one of his masterworks, *Sociologie des Brazzavilles noires* (1955), to be read in its new edition with a wonderful preface by Jean Copans (1985). Note that this African study was chronologically contemporaneous with those dedicated to French towns and cities edited by Chombart de Lauwe (1913–1990) (*L’Agglomération parisienne*. Paris: CNRS, 1952, 1954).

Again at the request of the High Commissioner, Balandier made parallel studies of messianism, new Churches, and political movements. This was also part of a vast research programme covering several territories, for which Jean Guiart (born in 1925) was tasked with reporting on Oceania. Observing the politics behind the religion, Balandier, whose first articles included a reference to Stalin (which was deleted when they were reprinted), set the rule, and herein lies his originality, to never start from a study of the permanent, continuous or structural,

but rather of rifts, ruptures and the antagonisms, which he saw as the truth erupting from a situation; this last expression being obviously borrowed from Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980). Indeed, Balandier forged some ties with the *Temps Modernes* in which he published several articles, including “L’Utopie de Benoît Ogoula Iquaqua” (1952). Nevertheless, he chose *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie* to publish his programmatic article: “The colonial situation: a theoretical approach” (1951), in which he maintains: “To conduct ethnological studies without taking into account the colonial situation is mocking the reality.” Academically, he proposed to examine African societies through their reactions, reinterpretations, innovations and ability to “regain the initiative.”

Once a student had earned a degree (*licence*), he or she would enrol for a doctoral thesis (*thèse d’État*). And Balandier was no exception. The Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), founded in 1939, awarded grants to doctoral students assigned to their director’s research unit. Now a sociologist, Balandier, who was preparing to return to France, was a member of the Centre de Sociologie, directed by Georges Gurvitch (1874–1965), formerly associated to the Bolchevist movement and Lenin, who had succeeded Émile Durkheim (1858–1917) and Georges Davy (1883–1976) on the chair of sociology at the Sorbonne.

With his article on “The Colonial Situation,” Balandier launched the third stage of French African studies, which had begun with the ethnography of military officers and colonial administrators. The creation of a chair in Sudanese civilisation at the Institut des Langues Orientales for Maurice Delafosse (1870–1926) gave it further weight from 1912 on, and it reached the height of its influence during the 1920s and 1930s. It later accommodated and was subsequently replaced by the academic ethnology taught by Marcel Mauss and the Institut d’Ethnologie. In 1942, the appointment of Marcel Griaule (1898–1956) to the first chair in ethnography at the Sorbonne gave to this ethnology an institutional recognition and imposed this type of Africanist studies, the subject of which was the “first human,” primitive and authentic, through still-present variants and manifestations. In 1931, the creation of the Société des Africanistes provided, until the war, a bridge between military officers and scholars of all kinds, since

more than a third of its *Journal* was devoted to prehistory and the research undertaken by Abbé Breuil (1877–1961) and his disciples.

As Balandier was conducting his modern researches in Africa, Jacques Berques (1910–1995) was doing the same for the Arab world, Louis Dumont (1911–1998) for India, and Georges Condominas (1921–2011) for what was then still called Indochina. Each with his own style, all three released their cultural areas from the straightjacket of orientalism, while Jean Guiart used a structure-based method for his research on Oceania. Americanists would have to wait for their own epistemological revolution. Alfred Métraux (1902–1963) and Claude Lévi-Strauss were both contributors to the classic *Handbook of South American Indians* by Julian Steward (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1940–47) and only Roger Bastide (1898–1974) suggested a different path with his discussion of black Americans, which would take time to materialise.

On returning to France, Balandier joined the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) in 1952. The next few years were intensely busy. Highly active at the *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie*, he was a member of the editorial committee of the *Présence Africaine* review alongside Césaire, Senghor, Monod, Leiris, Sartre, Richard Wright, Albert Camus, and André Gide. In 1952, the Institut d'Études Politiques invited him to give a course on development, which led several students to work on Africa, including Gabriel Gosselin (born 1938). At this point, in analogy to the third estate (*tiers-état*), he introduced the notion of the Third World (*Tiers-Monde*), a term coined in 1954 by the demographer Alfred Sauvy (1898–1990) (see Balandier, ed., *Le Tiers-Monde: sous-développement et développement*, 1956). Adopted by other writers, the term went on to be used around the world. At the end of 1953, Balandier was appointed director of the International Research Bureau on the Social Consequences of Technical Progress set up by the International Social Sciences Council, founded under the auspices of UNESCO, of which Lévi-Strauss was the Secretary General. Balandier soon recruited Claude Meillassoux (1925–2005) to produce summaries of works in English, particularly by the Manchester School. Meillassoux had studied political science in France and economics in the United States before joining the Trotskyist movement, and had no previous experience of either anthropology or Africa. In 1958, Balandier sent him to study the social

consequences of the development of coffee and cocoa plantations in Côte d'Ivoire. On his return, Meillassoux wrote an article ("Essai d'interprétation du phénomène économique dans les sociétés traditionnelles d'autosubsistance." *Cahiers d'études africaines*, 1960, 4: 38–67) and a book (*Anthropologie économique des Gouro de Côte d'Ivoire. De l'économie de subsistance à l'agriculture commerciale*. Paris: Mouton, 1964), which, although substantivist in form, was a founding text of Marxist anthropology.

In 1947, the Rockefeller Foundation funded the creation of twenty-three teaching and research posts, which led to the opening of the Sciences Économiques et Sociales department (VIème section) of the École Pratique des Hautes Études (EPHE), now the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales), which Mauss had first advocated in the 1920s. The historian Fernand Braudel (1902–1985) was appointed director. Lévi-Strauss was close to Braudel (they had both been in Brazil) and Balandier was elected Directeur d'Études for the course Sociology of sub-Saharan Africa, while at the same time defending two theses on 26 June 1954³: "Changements sociaux et culturels au Gabon et au Congo: Situation coloniale et changements sociaux" (605 pages) and "Évolués et problèmes d'évolution dans les centres de Brazzaville: Sociologie des Brazzavilles noires" (292 pages), which Lévi-Strauss reviewed in the *Revue française de science politique* (1956, vol. 6(1): 177–179). Balandier's appointment was the first step towards the formation of an Africanist group at the VIème section and he was joined there by other colleagues over the years, starting with his friend Paul Mercier, the geographer Gilles Sautter, the ethnologist Denise Paulme, the historian Henri Brunschwig (1904–1989), at the time a specialist in Prussia but with whom Braudel had spent his captivity during World War II in Germany, and the Belgian Jacques Maquet (1919–1913), who moved to the University of California, Berkeley a few years later.

3 At the time, doctoral theses (*doctorat d'État*) consisted of two theses: a main thesis and a complementary or secondary one. Georges Balandier's main thesis was called: *Changements sociaux et culturels au Gabon et au Congo* (published by Les Presses universitaires de France, it then became *Sociologie actuelle de l'Afrique Noire*, 1955). The title of his secondary thesis was: *Évolués et problèmes d'évolution dans les centres de Brazzaville*. The successful defence of his thesis made him eligible to become a doctoral supervisor and to apply for a professorial chair.

His aim in the sixth section of the EPHE was to create a group that would provide an alternative and be complementary to the one offered by Marcel Griaule, who wielded enormous influence at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (and died in 1956), to the Institut Français d'Afrique Noire and its Secretary General Théodore Monod, and to the Laboratoire d'Anthropologie of the Museum d'Histoire Naturelle where Lévi-Strauss had not been chosen to succeed his mentor Paul Rivet in 1950. The museum's professors appointed a physical anthropologist, Henri Vallois (1889–1981), instead. Among Balandier's first students were Robert Jaulin (1928–1996), Michel Izard (1931–2012), Françoise Héritier (born 1933), Ariane Deluz (1931–2010), coming to him from Lévi-Strauss. In 1955, however, Lévi-Strauss got into a row with Gurvitch, and Balandier would thus have his loyalties divided.

Exotic novels and accounts had been fashionable since at least the 1920s. Dealing with the last wild humans or the last Papuans, they were light on scientific detail and spiced up with the exotic adventures of the author, who was the real hero of the story. The explorer, geographer, geologist and ethnologist Jean Malaurie (born 1922) therefore decided to give an alternative account of the human condition. The publisher Plon accepted his series, called "Terre Humaine." He authored the first volume, *Les derniers rois de Thulé. Avec les Esquimaux polaires face à leur destin* (Malaurie, 1955), which was followed by *Tristes Tropiques* by Lévi-Strauss (1955), *Les immémoriaux* by Victor Segalen (1956, reprint of the 1907 edition), and *Afrique ambiguë* by Georges Balandier (1957). Balandier's work had a big impact and was the first to fully respect the spirit of the collection. Although written in the first person, it gives a voice to ordinary Africans. While the accounts written by Malaurie and Lévi-Strauss retain much of the adventurous aspect of ethnology, Balandier distances himself from this approach that is almost absent from his writing. Contemporary Africa was the protagonist in this work, in which Balandier included everything that would have been out of place in his more scientific works.

The Centre d'Études Africaines was created in 1956 within the sixth section, where Balandier's teaching focused on the emerging relations between economic and social changes. Balandier became its director and Ariane Deluz was appointed as one of the centre's assistants, where she set up the first French Africanist library. The idea of focusing

scientific research on cultural areas allowed Balandier to transcend the distinction and the opposition between anthropology and sociology. This approach, combined with Balandier's personal ambition and his theoretical and practical independence, led him to break with Lévi-Strauss. The latter, after the setback at the Sorbonne, turned his sights on the Collège de France, where he already had plans to set up a social anthropology unit, the Laboratoire d'Anthropologie Sociale, established in 1960. For Lévi-Strauss, this laboratory would transcend research on specific cultural areas, such as Louis Dumont's Centre d'Études Indiennes and Jean Guiart's Centre d'Études Océaniques. This difference of opinion earned Balandier an unpleasant rebuke from Lévi-Strauss in 1962 (*La pensée sauvage*) and had an impact on his subsequent career, since Balandier was never to enter the Collège de France.

After de Gaulle had become President of the French Republic on 13 May 1958, Bernard Cornut-Gentille briefly served as his Minister for Overseas Affairs from 3 June 1958 to 8 January 1959 and was a firm supporter of a French Algeria. The latter invited Balandier to become his advisor. At this time, France was proposing a new form of alliance with its former colonies – the Communauté Française – which was put to the vote of its various populations. President de Gaulle personally set out to convince Dakar and Abidjan to join the new federation. Cornut-Gentille urged him to stop over in Conakry as he travelled between the two cities. The main post-independence leaders, all members of the same political party, the Rassemblement Démocratique Africain, were mostly educated at the École Normale of the educator William Ponty in Dakar. Such was the case of the future presidents Félix Houphouët-Boigny (1905–1993) of Côte d'Ivoire, Modibo Keita (1915–1977) of Mali, Hubert Maga (1916–2000) of Dahomey (now Benin), Hamani Diori (1916–1989) of Niger – and dozens of other politicians of their generation. Trained by the communist Confédération Générale des Travailleurs (CGT), and former secretary general of the postal union, the unruly Ahmed Sékou Touré (1922–1984) of French Guinea had come to power by an entirely different route. The 45-minute speech he gave in front of de Gaulle on 25 August 1958, as fiery as it was inappropriate, led to a breakdown in relations. De Gaulle had come to look for a union-partnership with France but Guinea was the only French colony in Africa to vote for immediate independence in September 1958. Balandier the advisor had not foreseen that de

Gaulle would be as proud as the tribune Sékou Touré. His political role was over.

Cahiers d'Études Africaines, the mouthpiece of the Centre for African Studies (Centre d'Études Africaines), and the counterpart of the *Journal de la Société des Africanistes*, was first published in 1960 with a foreword by Fernand Braudel. Georges Balandier appointed as editor Pierre Alexandre (1922–1994), professor of Bantu languages at the Institut des Langues Orientales, who he had known since his Brazzaville days. Between 1961 and 1966, Balandier was made responsible for teaching at the École Normale Supérieure located on Rue d'Ulm, a breeding ground for French intellectuals since the Third Republic. As the war in Algeria rumbled on, many French colonies in sub-Saharan Africa became independent, and Patrice Lumumba (1925–1961), assassinated the same year, was an inspiring figure for many young students. Emmanuel Terray (born 1935), Marc Augé (born 1935) and Jean Bazin (1941–2001) were among the students who discovered Africanism through these courses. In 1962 Gurvitch and Raymond Aron (1905–1983) secured the election of Balandier as professor of African sociology at the Sorbonne (renamed the Université Paris V – Université Paris René Descartes in 1971) before succeeding Georges Gurvitch on the chair in general sociology in 1965. Pierre Alexandre then succeeded Balandier as director of the African section of the Centre d'Études et de Recherches sur les Relations Internationales, which was part of the Institut des Sciences Politiques that he oversaw.

The seminar papers given by students at the EPHE, which took a field approach to residential communities, ethnicities and territories, were regularly published by *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*. At this time, Balandier was also working on the history of Africa, and the publisher Hachette commissioned him to write *La vie quotidienne au royaume de Kongo du XVIe au XVIIIème siècles* (1965), after which he returned to political anthropology, which he vigorously contrasted with structural anthropology. During the second half of the 1960s, a time of student activism and Maoist groups and turbulence, such work was a bit of a collective production. Published in 1967, *Anthropologie politique*, to which Dan Sperber (born 1942) was an important contributor, was the first publication to review and summarise anthropological research in this field, and included an overview of the literature on the subject. Anthropology was fashionable and enjoying international success.

The volume was translated into every European language and even into Japanese.

Having “left in order to stay” in the words of Edgar Faure (1908–1988), one of de Gaulle’s ministers, France provided considerable technical support to countries in the process of decolonisation. It was an expensive undertaking and the government set up an apparatus to accompany the process. Young graduates who chose to swap their military service for overseas service served as administrators, doctors, agronomists, primary and secondary school teachers and even as assistants in recently-opened universities. Although initially focused on sub-Saharan African, the strategy was later extended to Algeria, Madagascar and former Indochina. Most of Balandier’s students, including Marc Augé, Emmanuel Terray, Jean Copans, Jean Jamin (born 1945), or Jean-Loup Amselle (born 1942) for Africa, along with many others, took advantage of the scheme and even managed to extend their two-year stay as part of their national service.

In the mid-1960s, Balandier became head of the humanities department (Section des Sciences Humaines) of the Office de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique Outre-Mer (ORSTOM). The overseas service enabled him to recruit doctoral students, who were often hired by the department still within the same scheme of their national service. They included Bernard Schlemmer, Pierre-Philippe Rey (born 1943), and Georges Dupré; their work embedded the Marxist approach. Balandier and Gilles Sautter also convinced the CNRS to create the Laboratoire de Sociologie et de Géographie Africaines (LA.94) in 1966. Here, they organised an “interdisciplinary seminar” on Tuesdays with Paul Mercier, that would go on to play a central role, but its existence also gave rise to research missions, particularly outside French-speaking Africa, such as the work of Christian Geffray (1954–2001) on Mozambique and Marc Abélès on Ethiopia.

Balandier gave a lukewarm reception to the events of May 1968. In fact, he was at times critical and, according to his own account, his main concern was to save the Sorbonne’s library from destruction. However, the events did inform his thinking and the wave they unfurled carried him along with them. Under the title *Sens et puissance*, he published a collection of articles in 1971, sometimes revised and corrected, taking advantage of the leftist theoretical wave that followed the events and

confronted structuralism. After the booklet *Georges Gurvitch, sa vie, son œuvre* (1972), in which Balandier attempted to summarise the legacy of this sociologist of the movement, he published *Anthropo-logiques* (1974), a major work on social inequalities and its dynamics, not only in terms of professional regroupings but also – and in this he reflected the concerns of the time – according to differences in gender and age.

At the same time, French-speaking Africa had experienced, or was experiencing, a series of *coups d'états*, in which regimes formed by the French politics of the Fourth Republic had given way to dictatorships whose protagonists had all fought in the ranks of the French army in Indochina and Algeria. Jean-Bedel Bokassa (1921–1996) seized power in the Central African Republic in 1966, followed by Gnassingbé Eyadéma (1935–2005) in Togo in 1967, Mathieu Kérékou (1933–2015) in Benin in 1972, and Sangoulé Lamizana (1916–2005) in Upper Volta in 1974. Although Senghor's Senegal survived, it experienced its share of strife; Sékou Touré's revolution had descended into a bitter dictatorship; Houphouët-Boigny, the first president of Ivory Coast, pursued a highly questionable policy abroad – he supplied arms to rebels in the Mano region, backed the secession of Biafra in May 1967, cooperated with apartheid South Africa, and supported Charles Taylor in Liberia – while exercising political repression at home by imprisoning several former allies, creating a one-party system to rubber-stamp his decisions (and expelling Emmanuel Terray, then assistant at the university of Abidjan).

This Africa, no longer a continent of hope in humanist progress but a continent of torture, imprisonment and summary executions, was of less interest to Balandier, who took stock of the situation and published his assessment in an autobiographical work called *Histoire d'autres* (1977). He occasionally continued to cite Africa as an example in *Le pouvoir sur scènes*, published in 1980, in which he examined the staging of power and its theatricalisation defined as its very essence, including in the inversion of its signs during interregnum periods, carnival or with the king's fool (*Le pouvoir sur scènes*, updated in new editions in 1992 and 2006). The book by Jean Copans on Balandier's work on all of these aspects (*Georges Balandier, un anthropologue en première ligne*, 2014) provides more detail on this issue. Nevertheless, it was difficult for Balandier to forget Africa, not least because, in addition to work by other doctoral students, that same year he had

to close read the seven-volume thesis submitted by Michel Izard (*Les archives orales d'un royaume africain. Recherche sur la formation du Yatenga*, doctoral thesis, Paris, Université René Descartes-Paris V, 1980).

As a member of the French section of the Workers' International (Section Française de l'Internationale Ouvrière, SFIO) between 1946 and 1951, Balandier had seen François Mitterrand (1916–1996) at work as minister for French overseas territories (1950–51) and as minister for home affairs at the start of the war in Algeria (1954–55). He was not a supporter of Mitterrand, although a number of his students took advantage of his first seven-year mandate (1981–88). Against the re-election of Mitterrand, he lent his support to another candidate in the 1988 presidential elections, Raymond Barre (1924–2007), an independent conservative, a former prime minister of president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing (born 1926) and a professor who had been a contributor to the economic section of the periodical *Critique* (Barre gained 19% of the votes). Although Africa was still present in Balandier works, including in *Le detour: pouvoir et modernité* (1985), in which he cast an anthropologist's "view from afar" eye on monarchical power in Europe and Africa, it was fast receding.

Balandier, who was then writing regularly for *Le Monde* (his articles have partly been collected in *Du social par temps incertain*, 2013), wanted to reach out to a wider audience and in partnership with Fayard – a publisher of both serious and popular works, unlike Presses Universitaires de France or the CNRS – his works in this period explored every aspect of "hypermodernity." *Le désordre: éloge du mouvement* (1988), *Le dédale: pour en finir avec le XXe siècle* (1994), *Le grand système* (2001), *Le grand dérangement* (2005), are essays in which Balandier dissects the "political posturing," the breakdown of social ties, the demobilisation of social actors, technological powers, the body, identities, biotechnology, globalisation, and the discovery of "new worlds" through technology. These books are written in a journalistic style without a critical commentary, an approach most readily associated with the pen of, for example, Edgar Morin (born 1921). It should be noted that Balandier always wrote to the same high literary and stylistic standards. These works obviously reflect the political preoccupations of the time, including *Fenêtre sur un nouvel âge* (2008), which discusses the rise of Nicolas Sarkozy to the

presidency, with François Hollande's path to this position examined in *Recherche du politique perdu* (2015). Although varied, these works all have one point in common: they all criticise what Balandier saw as the narrowness and misery that too often accompany "hypermodernity." He wanted them to fight against the subjection and debasement that, according to him, were taking hold. At the same time, he also wrote *Conjugaisons* (1997) and *Civilisés, dit-on* (2003), two collections of texts, both "anti-memoir" in style, once again looking back over his analytical and intellectual development.

On a personal note: Although he continued as editorial director of the *Sociologie d'aujourd'hui* series (Presses Universitaires de France) and the *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie*, in which position he was eventually succeeded by Michel Wieviorka (1946–2017) (until the journal closed in 2011), Balandier retired in 1985. He supervised my graduate diploma dissertation in 1983 and then again in 1984, my thesis, under the new system, and so I benefited from his two final years of teaching. According to the central register, he supervised 203 theses and mine was one of the last if not the last. The seminars were small and he talked to us about African royalty, evoking the works of Michel Izard, Georges Dupré, Alfred Adler and Emmanuel Terray, who had just submitted the volumes of his doctoral thesis (replaced in 1984 by a post-doctoral thesis leading to the "accreditation to direct research"), which he complained was far too long (it was cut down to 1,058 pages for publication: *Une histoire du royaume Abron du Gyaman, des origines à la conquête coloniale*. Paris: Éditions Karthala, 1995). It was through Emmanuel Terray (not yet able to supervise theses) that I came to study under Balandier and, living abroad, Balandier generously agreed that I should only attend his seminars when I was in Paris.

Institutionally, Balandier was a benevolent protector of researchers who, members of ORSTOM or of his own research unit at the CNRS, failed to get their work in on time and, as Mrs Flora Petit, the Centre's secretary – and also sometimes his personal secretary – explained to me, if he had fingers in a lot of pies and "lost time on so many committees, it was to secure grants and opportunities for people who had approached him." This is how I personally benefited from a grant provided by the Fondation de France.

Georges Balandier was a mandarin of the old school, a tolerant liberal in the tradition of Raymond Aron, who accepted contributions from people whose opinions he was far from sharing, untainted by tribalism, patronage, or exclusion. This can be seen in the diversity of the theoretical orientations, careers, interests and political opinions of the people who contributed to the volumes published as a tribute to him: *Afrique plurielle, Afrique actuelle* (1986), *Une anthropologie des turbulences* (1985) and *Les nouveaux enjeux de l'anthropologie* (1993).

This obituary may be concluded with a quote from Emmanuel Terray, which sums up Balandier's openness: "Then Balandier arrived' ... or we discovered him, to be more precise. First he spoke to us of the colonial situation and what it meant for those subjected to it, and, by the same token, demonstrated how the study of this situation had a legitimate role to play in ethnological research." And, from memory, the phrase that best sums up his contributions: "He taught us that we could practice anthropological research in coach stations and bars."

List of major works of Georges Balandier

- 1943 *Lettres sur la poésie*. Preface by Madeleine Champion. Paris: Les Cahiers Littéraires.
- 1947 *Tous comptes faits*. Paris: Éditions du Pavois (Le Chemin de la vie). 236 pp.
- 1947 "Le Noir est un homme." *Présence Africaine*, nr. 1 (Nov.-Dec.), pp. 31-36.
- 1947- (ed.) *Études guinéennes. Bulletin du Centrifan de Conakry*.
- 1949 *Problèmes économiques et problèmes politiques au niveau du village Fang*. Brazzaville: Institut d'Études Centrafricaines.
- 1951 "La situation coloniale: approche théorique." *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie* 11: 44-79. English translation 1970.
- 1951 *Aspects psychologiques et problèmes actuels de l'Afrique Noire*. Paris: Centre d'études asiatiques et africaines. 117 pp.
- 1952 "Contribution à une Sociologie de la Dépendance." *Cahiers Internationaux de Sociologie* 12: 47-69.
- 1952 with Paul Mercier, *Particularisme et évolution. Les pêcheurs Lébou du Sénégal*. Saint-Louis du Sénégal: Institut Français d'Afrique Noire (*Études Sénégalaises*, nr. 3). 216 pp.

- 1952 with Jean-Claude Pauvert, *Les villages gabonais. Aspects démographiques, économiques, sociologiques, projets de modernisation*. Brazzaville: Institut d'Études Centrafricaines (Mémoires Institut d'Études Centrafricaines nr. 5). 91 pp.
- 1952 "L'Utopie de Benoît Ogoula Iquaqua." *Les Temps Modernes*, nr. 84: 771–781.
- 1954 *Conséquences sociales de l'industrialisation et problèmes urbains en Afrique: étude bibliographique*. Paris: Bureau international de recherche sur les implications sociales du progrès technique. 77 pp.
- 1954 *Changements sociaux et culturels au Gabon et au Congo. Situation coloniale et changements sociaux*. Thèse du doctorat d'Etat, principale. 605 pp. Published 1955.
- 1954 *Évolués et problèmes d'évolution dans les centres de Brazzaville. Sociologie des Brazzavilles noires*. Thèse du doctorat d'Etat, complémentaire. 292 pp.
- 1955 *Sociologie des Brazzavilles noires*. Paris: Armand Colin. 274 pp. 2nd, extended edition with a preface and a bibliography by Jean Copans, 1985.
- 1955 *Sociologie actuelle de l'Afrique Noire. Dynamique des changements sociaux en Afrique Centrale*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de Paris. 510 pp. English translation 1970.
- 1955 *L'Anthropologie appliquée aux problèmes des pays sous-développés*. Paris: Cours de Droit (Université de Paris, Institut d'études politiques, 1954–1955). 376 p.
- 1956 (ed.) *Le Tiers-Monde: sous-développement et développement*. Preface by Alfred Sauvy. Paris: Presses Universitaires de Paris (Travaux et documents de l'Institut national d'études démographiques, INED, nr. 27). 393 pp.
- 1957 *Afrique ambiguë*. Paris: Librairie Plon (Terre Humaine). 291 pp.
- 1959 *Les pays "sous-développés": aspects et perspectives*. Paris: Cours de Droit (Université de Paris, Institut d'études politiques, 1958–1959). 286 pp.
- 1961 *Les pays en voie de développement. Analyse sociologique et politique*. Paris: Cours de Droit (Université de Paris, Institut d'études politiques, 1960–1961). 312 pp.
- 1965 *La vie quotidienne au royaume de Kongo du XVIIe au XVIIIème siècles*. Paris: Hachette.
- 1967 *Anthropologie politique*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de Paris (Le Sociologue 12). 240 pp. 5th ed. 1999. 237 pp.

- 1968 Georges Balandier and Jacques Maquet (eds.) *Dictionnaire des civilisations africaines*. Paris: Fernand Hazan. 448 pp. English edition 1974.
- 1970 (ed.) *Sociologie des mutations*. Paris: Editions Anthropos. 531 pp.
- 1970 *The Sociology of Black Africa: Social Dynamics in Central Africa*. English transl. by Douglas Garman. London: Deutsch. 540 pp.
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- 1970 *Political Anthropology*. London: Allen Lane. 214 pp. Penguin Books 1972.
- 1971 *Sens et puissance. Les dynamiques sociales*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de Paris. 334 pp. 2nd ed. 1981, 3rd ed. 1986, 4th ed. 2004.
- 1972 *Georges Gurvitch, sa vie, son œuvre*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de Paris. 120 pp.
- 1974 *Anthropo-logiques*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de Paris. 278 pp. 2nd ed., revue et corrigée, augmenté d’un avant-propos inédit: “Les anthropo-logiques dans la modernité.” Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 1985, 319 pp.
- 1974 Georges Balandier and Jacques Maquet (eds.) *Dictionary of Black African Civilization*. New York: Leon Amiel Publisher. 350 pp.
- 1977 *Histoire d’autres*. Paris: Stock. 320 pp.
- 1980 *Le pouvoir sur scènes*. Paris: Balland. 188 pp. New editions 1992 and 2006.
- 1985 *Sociologie des Brazzavilles noires*. 2nd, extended edition with a preface and a bibliography by Jean Copans. Paris: Armand Colin.
- 1985 *Le detour: pouvoir et modernité*. Paris: Fayard. 266 pp.
- 1988 *Le désordre: éloge du mouvement*. Paris: Fayard. 252 pp.
- 1994 *Le dédale: pour en finir avec le XXe siècle*. Paris: Fayard. 236 pp.
- 1997 *Conjugaisons*. Paris: Fayard. 411 pp.
- 2001 *Le Grand Système*. Paris: Fayard. 274 pp.
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- 2005 *Le grand dérangement*. Paris: Fayard. 119 pp.
- 2008 *Fenêtre sur un nouvel âge (2006–2007)*. Paris: Fayard. 287 pp.

- 2009 *Le dépaysement contemporain: l'immédiat et l'essentiel*. Entretiens avec Joël Birman et Claudine Haroche. Paris: Presses Universitaires de Paris. 209 pp.
- 2012 *Carnaval des apparences ou nouveaux commencements?* Paris: Fayard. 283 pp.
- 2013 *Du social par temps incertain*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de Paris. 318 pp. Collection of articles published in *Le Monde*.
- 2015 *Recherche du politique perdu*. Paris: Fayard. 121 pp.

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