

**How *Angelica* Became *The Strange Case of Angelica*:
From the Idea to the Script to the Book to the Film**

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Abstract

In 2010, the Portuguese screenwriter/director Manoel de Oliveira (1908-2015) would finally film *Angelica*, one of his most beloved screenplays. Inspired on a real episode – the death of a beautiful young woman and the consequences of her *post mortem* photo (photo taken by Oliveira himself) –, the screenplay was originally written (1950/54) during the Portuguese *Estado Novo* Dictatorship (1933–74), whose authorities systematically rejected (financing) the project. The screenplay was later published in 1988 with a new *decoupage*, having the indication of the expected time (in minutes) for each shot. Ten years after, in 1998, a new version, published by the French editor *Dis-Voir*, improved the screenplay by adding photos of the sets. Finally, in 2010, the shooting script arrived with a new title – *The Strange Case of Angelica* - and some additional changes. The screenplay was developed throughout the course of almost sixty years, having four main versions: 1950/54; 1988; 1998; 2010. Through its reading, it is possible to perceive how the film envisioned by Oliveira subtly evolved, achieving refined nuances that diverge from the original idea. Following the screenplay evolution, this article explores how many political, historical and financial aspects impact the progression of the writings. Manoel de Oliveira's resilience to tell a story emerges as we move through the analysis of the screenplay development, showing us how his fidelity to his first intuition was kept alive, although shaped and refined by his artistic maturity and an extraordinary ability to adapt.

Keywords: Manoel de Oliveira, *The Strange Case of Angelica*, screenwriting history, Portuguese screenwriting, screenplay layout, genetic criticism

How *Angelica* Became *The Strange Case of Angelica*: From the Idea to the Script to the Book to the Film

Starting in the silent film epoch with *Douro, Faina Fluvial / Labor on the Douro* (1931) and changing to the digital format at the end of the first decade of the 21st century, Manoel de Oliveira's career crossed different periods of Portuguese history; namely António de Oliveira Salazar's dictatorship (1933-1974), in which many of Oliveira's screenplay projects did not arrive to its film form due to the tight censorship (see Benis, 2017b). *Angelica* was one of those projects Oliveira "was not allowed to make" (Oliveira, 1998, p. 5).

Angelica's screenplay tells the story of Isaac, a photographer asked to take photography of a deceased young woman – Angelica –, who later visits him and becomes his fatal obsession. The screenplay has four main versions, corresponding respectively to the years 1950/1954, 1988, 1998 and 2010. According to Oliveira: "*Angelica* was thought in 1950, written in haste in 1952 and fully developed in 1954" (Grugeau & Loiselle, 1998/99, p. 28). In 1954, Oliveira submitted the screenplay for financial support at the censorship secretariat, the Secretariado Nacional de Informação (SNI)/National Secretariat of Information, but obtained no answer: "Time passed and they did not give me any answer. Years passed without telling me anything" (Baecque & Parsi, 1999, p. 143). In the Portuguese National Archive of Torre do Tombo, the original screenplay for *Angelica* can be found in a file submitted on the 11th of January, 1954. As Oliveira mentioned, no reply was given to his application: on the superior right corner of the file, the usual stamp notification with the SNI's response date is left blank. The absence of reply is explained by the screenwriter-director:

The plot of *Angelica* is based upon two intertwining themes: The first has to do with death, depicted by the sudden death of a young bride, Angelica, the victim of an extrauterine pregnancy which the doctors failed to diagnose in time. The second theme is war, depicted through the character Isaac, a Jew, fleeing Nazi persecution [. . .]

A story of this kind had nothing to recommend itself to the regime, nor was it suitable for distracting people from more political matters [. . .] I waited patiently until 1955, when I came to realize the silence was nothing but a stratagem to keep me quiet. (1998, p. 6)

This essay follows *Angelica*'s project, unveiling the subtle affinities/variations detected throughout the screenplay's progress, emphasizing on how the project succeeds in developing from its very initial idea (in 1950) to its shooting script/film form (in 2010). Aligned with the field of 'genetic criticism'¹, this analysis of *Angelica*'s screenplay development not only focus on its multiple social, political, financial determinations, but also adapts a 'genetic' approach, trying, as Adrian Martin expressed, "to understand and grasp how the essential core of a work – the embryonic idea that is encoded into its cinematic DNA – does (or does not) survive its multiple, material elaborations at all levels" (2014, p.16).

Changes in the Screenplay Layout

In the first version of *Angelica*'s screenplay (1954) we discover a page layout that offers a rare horizontal exposition *decoupage* (that Oliveira would never repeat). By then Oliveira could be testing the screenplay page horizontal format. His innovative spirit always kept experimenting different solutions and screenwriting styles: Almost every single screenplay of his explores some level of formal novelty, as if constantly searching for the best way to translate a moving image into a writing format. This 1954's screenplay additionally uses the two-column arrangement, which, as pointed out by Ian McDonald, "is claimed to have been the French convention for cutting continuities since the 1930s" (2013, p. 170), something that makes sense since the French model was by then the major influence in Portuguese cinema (see Benis, 2020). Another relatively common aspect at the time is the

¹ 'Genetic criticism' in cinema has been worked by a few scholars and critics such as François Thomas (1989), Janet Bergtrom (1999), Pierre-Marc De Biasi (2000), Bill Krohn (2003), Carole Le Berre (2004), Nicole Brenez (2007), Wallace Watson (2008), Jordan Mintzer (2012), Ian W. McDonald (2013) or Adrian Martin (2014).

decoupage being divided in the number of shots (303 shots) and not in the number of scenes (as it is common nowadays).

In 1988, the Portuguese Cinematheque, celebrating Manoel de Oliveira's eightieth birthday, published a book – *Alguns Projectos não Realizados e Outros Textos / Some Unfilmed Projects and Other Texts* – with some of the many projects Oliveira was unable to film during the censorship period, including *Angelica*. This second version of *Angelica's* screenplay (1988) already presents a vertical layout (with a single column arrangement). Still, the screenplay is constrained by the book format, which affects the screenplay style and its technical language: Namely, each page of the volume is divided in two columns, with each column corresponding to a script page. The most remarkable novelty in this new version is the indication of the expected time (minutes inscribed in the head scene) for each shot: The timing (*minutage*) of the film, an extra element introduced to help the reader's imagination. Besides this, the text does not change much from its first version (1954). A few new scenes are introduced and others are reordered, without having a major impact. Some small corrections occur such as taking out adjectives, like replacing “the indecorous boogie-woogie” (Oliveira, 1954, p. 13) for “the boogie-woogie” (Oliveira, 1988, p. 20). In the whole, the 1988 version remains fairly close to the 1954 original².

Ten years later, in 1998, a new version of *Angelica's* screenplay is published by the French publisher *Dis-Voir*: A book exclusively dedicated to the film's project, and published in both French and English. This new version is closer to a screenplay layout. The main novelty it brings is the inclusion of a significant amount of photos of the possible sets (most of which later became the actual sets on the movie filmed in 2010). Mathias Lavin pertinently highlights how impressive “the troubling similarities” (2013, p. 20) are between the photos

² This can be explained by the fact that the 1954 screenplay is dated from the 11th of January, 1954 and the screenplay published in 1988 actually corresponds to a copy of a draft from the 18th June, 1954 (only five months between the two versions)

(and the descriptions) in the screenplay and the final sets in the film: “Such proximity between the idea and its concretization bears witness to the personal investment of its creator” (2013, p. 20). Indeed, Manoel de Oliveira would later confess that “I kept on thinking about doing this movie for many years” (Oliveira & Costa, 2008, p. 59). As time went by, the screenwriter-director kept on developing the screenplay, as if waiting for the opportunity to film: “I modified it a lot, I went on changing it” (Oliveira & Costa, 2008, p. 59). When the opportunity finally arrived (with the producer challenging him in 2007), the rewritings immediately multiplied. A total of at least 15 revisions were made between the autumn of 2007 and the spring of 2010, according to Manoel de Oliveira (2010, p. 50). In the summer of 2010, the final version of the screenplay – with the new title *O Estranho Caso de Angélica / The Strange Case of Angelica* – was finally filmed by Manoel de Oliveira.³

Thematic Evolution

Angelica's original screenplay (1954) already evokes some of the recurring themes in Oliveira's subsequent cinema, namely the aesthetic romanticism sought by the 19th century Portuguese novelist Camilo Castelo Branco, one of the most fertile influences in Oliveira's cinematic imagery. Camilo's words, “I would love everything, but I love death much more” (Oliveira, 2008), were always a kind of obsession and enigma for Manoel de Oliveira. Adding to that, the writer-director would develop (in many of his films) a common (to Camilo) conception of ‘passion’: as a condition impossible to fulfil or satisfy, in which death represents the role of the definitive promise in the fulfilment of such love. In Oliveira words:

You can say that death was born with love. If you can't be born without love, it is love that gives death. The marriage between love and death, in the romantic tradition, goes way back in time. (Baecque & Parsi, 1999, p. 112)

³ After the film's opening, the screenplay was published once more in a bilingual edition (Portuguese and French), organized by António Preto, in *L'Avant Scène Cinéma* 58, March 2011. A translation of the original shooting script (2010), slightly adapted by integrating all of the dialogue variations introduced in the film.

Death is the ultimate abyss of love (p. 166)

This abyss would often stimulate Oliveira's artistic imagination, as it happened in 1950 when confronted with a striking personal experience (that triggered the idea for the film):

The idea itself stems from a sadly true story. My wife, Maria Isabel, was a close friend of her cousin, Maria Antónia [. . .] we received a phone call from the Casas Novas Country House, informing us that Maria Antónia was feeling ill [. . .] we had scarcely arrived at the driveway when one of her sisters, a very religious woman, always dressed in black, came down the stone staircase. She came up to us and before we even had time to get out of the car, gave us the sad news [. . .] she asked me to take a photograph, saying the dead woman was very beautiful and that her mother would like a picture to remember her by [. . .] My camera was a pre-war Leica, which had to be focused by looking through a split-image viewfinder which produced a double image, the second slightly more tenuous than the first. The two images split all the more the camera was out of focus, superimposing on one another when it was in focus. The exercise of focusing with precision on the dead woman gave me the impression of actually seeing the soul leaving the body. And it was that, in fact, which stimulated my imagination. Little by little, the idea took on substance and shape. (Oliveira, 1998, pp. 11, 12)

Looking carefully through the course of the approximately sixty years screenplay development (1950/54; 1988; 1998; 2010), we can perceive how the film envisioned by Oliveira subtly evolved, achieving refined nuances that diverge from the original trigger idea. In the different screenplay versions we find another structural, subterranean, timeless theme that emerges continuously throughout the texts which forms the true matrix of the film. As described by Oliveira in the introduction to his 1998 screenplay book version:

Passing from the temporal to the timeless – as is the case in *Angelica* – the idea of *mortal agony* (*agonia*) springs to my mind, ultimately the great struggle for survival, the heavy weight imposed by the human condition and the laws of nature. *Mortal agony* which, in the social realm, often deludes those who hold power, as opposed to the far greater number who are subjected to it and, marked by misfortune, sometimes bear the pain of such acute suffering that it actually reaches the point of *sublimation*. *Angelica* is the flight in quest for this sublime, outside our disparate and *enslaved civilization* [...]. Hence the deep-down desire for *liberation* which surfaces in certain individuals, less because of, than in reaction to, an extreme situation in their lives – as is the case, at root, in this script. (pp. 10, 11)

The idea of *agonia*⁴ emerges in Oliveira's discourse over time in his interviews. He describes it as “fight against death” (Oliveira & Costa, 2008, p. 75). A fight imbued with spiritual meaning, which “starts when you are born. A constant and permanent struggle. The word *agonia* came to us from the Greeks. It is applied to a fight, to the athletes. Since we are born death is nearby, not letting the slightest occasion” (Baecque & Parsi, 1999, p. 41). This timeless theme crosses all of *Angelica*'s screenplays, being continuously developed and refined through the different versions. Parallel to it (embedded in and overlapping with it) are then the other more temporal themes (‘death’ and ‘war’), which also undertake some changes as the screenplay evolves. While the ‘death’ theme is kept and refined mostly through the understanding of *Angelica*'s ghost character, the allusions to World War II are eliminated from the last version shooting script (2010). Oliveira felt the need to adapt. Still, as he remarked: “All the political side is taken out (but the Jews’ persecution towards Isaac will be perceived, I strongly believe)” (2010, p. 50).

⁴ From the Greek word *agōn* (Ἀγών): combat, struggle, fight, conflict. It can be applied to a dramatic context (a conflict between two characters, protagonist/antagonist, as in ancient Greek drama), to an athletic competition, or to a more spiritual realm (a struggle in the soul).

It should be noted that during the dictatorship period (1933-1974), unfavorable political and financial circumstances pushed Oliveira to the countryside, where he dedicated himself to agriculture for a period of almost 40 years⁵. These years of contact with nature became fundamental for him to mature his personal understanding of cinema, and to strengthen his vision on subjects such as life/death, man/earth or mortal agony (fundamental themes in *Angelica*):

So, I went back to earth. It is another rhythm. There is a time for everything, a time for the harvest. It is nature that rules. We are subject to weather conditions and there is a constant contact with working men. We have, then, a very particular feeling of the movement of natural things, which is not found in the industry. A job that is done in the spring cannot be done in the fall or winter. There is a time for each job, while the industry always runs the same way. This period helped me to learn more about cinema.

(Baecque and Parsi 1999, 146)

Character Development

Isaac

In all of the three first screenplay versions of *Angelica* (1954, 1988 and 1998) Isaac, the protagonist, is depicted as a sympathetic character in the eyes of the other characters, who express solidarity towards his victim/refugee condition (a World War II Jewish fugitive). No one seems to be uneasy with or against Isaac. We can verify this especially in the first screenplay (1954) when the memories of World War II were still present. Nobody regards Isaac with suspicion, there is no animosity in the dialogues. For instance, in the dialogue with Angelica's sister (identified as a 'woman' in the first three screenplay versions – and later as a 'nun', in the final shooting script), when Isaac identifies himself as a Jew (through his name:

⁵ Manoel de Oliveira, for decades, lived from the revenues of a family farm in Douro. His cinematographic activity has become quite intermittent during this period, with only two feature films shot in a period of nearly forty years.

Isaac), she expresses compassion: “The woman gives a kindly smile. They enter” (Oliveira, 1988, p. 23). Also, one of the boarding house residents remarks (suggesting the horrors of World War II): “– Oh, no! Such a proper man as he! ...perhaps tormented by a great nightmare” (Oliveira, 1954, p. 80). Likewise, Dona Justina, the owner of the boarding house, “after sensing Isaac’s departure, the woman laments him with a sober nod” (Oliveira, 1954, p. 67).

Later, in the final shooting script (2010), these manifestations of solidarity and regret are cut off from the text and the portrait of Isaac suffers a metamorphosis: The perception of the persecution is maintained (as Oliveira noticed), but the Jewish figure as a fugitive/victim/refugee is replaced by the theme of the wandering Jew⁶. Mathias Lavin suggests that the characters gathered in the boarding house have “a tendency to abstraction which confers an allegorical significance to the community thus gathered: The characters in the boarding house belong to our time as well as to a past century since they incarnate, in fact, a transhistorical condition” (2013, p. 33). The characters’ “transhistorical condition”, as well as the multitude of temporalities overlapping in the film⁷, help to define Isaac as a timeless outcast, precisely a figuration of the wandering Jew. It also becomes evident (in the shooting script version) that most of the other characters now repudiate the strangeness of Isaac. As the maid in Angelica’s house, who regards him with distrust, in a hostile, unwelcoming way: “The maid closes the door [to Isaac] with contempt” (Oliveira, 2010, p. 20). At the boarding house, no one is interested in the same things as Isaac, finding discomfort or displeasure in his presence: “– That gentleman is strange.”, “– We all think the same.” (Oliveira, 2010, p. 31). Even Dona Justina, the maternal owner of the boarding house, has her doubts about Isaac: “–

⁶ The legend concerns a Jew who taunted Jesus on the way to the crucifixion, then cursed to walk the Earth until the second coming of Christ. Among the many names attributed to this figure (Ahasver, Mathatias, Buttadeus, Juan, etc) is the name Isaac (Isaac Laquedem). Another denomination for this figure is “the one that waits for God” or the “Eternal Jew”.

This gentleman came by one day, suddenly, out of nowhere ...but he did not seem to me a bad person..." (Oliveira, 2010, p. 34). Isaac himself contributes to this exclusion since he does not participate in the conversations at the breakfast table, preferably taking his coffee on foot, slightly apart from the others (seated at the table).

Complementarily, the way Isaac relates and reacts to Christian environments/places is also of importance. For instance, on the shooting script (2010) there is a scene (that did not exist in the previous screenplays) where Isaac approaches the private chapel in Angelica's house, but stops at the door, restrained from stepping inside. Although he takes off his hat in a sign of respect (as if he had the intention of entering), something seems to hold him outside, as if he didn't feel allowed to enter the holy Christian space. He stands there "in front of the chapel door, in a silent waiting time" (Oliveira 2010, 19). At that moment, his inner voice repeats a poem from the book *God's Crossroads/As Encruzilhadas de Deus* (1935), by José Régio, as if meditating in the meaning of such words:

Isaac OFF:

ISAAC-OFF

Time! Stop! And you, creations of the past

Roaming by unreal and celestial paths

Angels! Open for me the gates... (...)

...of heaven

For in my night is day... and

I have God within. (Oliveira, 2010, p. 19)

Isaac's dialogues with Angelica's sister (the nun) are also significant. For instance, she reacts scandalized when hears his name and introduces herself as Maria das Dores, a "name by which she defines herself above all as Catholic" (Bourgois, 2013, p. 38):

⁷ According to António Preto, "in *The Strange Case of Angelica* everything merges into a complex temporality: clothes, décors and props from the 50s [...] live deliberately and insistently with themes and images of a perfectly contemporary city" (2014, p. 111).

Nun (in a muted tone):	NUN: (...) Mr. photographer, what is your name?
Isaac (willingly):	ISAAC: Isaac.
Nun (surprised):	NUN: Isaac !!!...
Isaac:	ISAAC: Yes, Isaac, dear sister.
Nun (affirmative):	NUN My name is Maria das Dores. I am the sister of the deceased Angelica and a devout Christian. (Oliveira, 2010, p. 8)

Another symbolic gesture (that is not depicted in any of the previous versions of *Angelica's* screenplay) comes in the final scene of the shooting script (2010) when Dona Justina “puts the crucifix with her right hand on top of the chest of Isaac’s dead corpse” (Oliveira, 2010, p. 48).

Throughout all the different screenplays Isaac seems to be kept from the Christian faith, anguished for not being able to understand it, haunted by metaphysical questions. However, at the end of the story, nevertheless, the spirit of Isaac flies away in the arms of Angelica (suggesting some type of afterlife survival, the overcoming of his condemnation). Manoel de Oliveira was very aware of this enigmatic reversal. He deliberately chose to save Isaac, opting to put an end to his condemnation.

There is nevertheless a great compromise that I had to make: When Isaac dies, his spirit persists. This end is the most compromising part of the film . . . In this film the fact that

Isaac survives through his spirit is a choice I made, a subtle and delicate but assumed choice . . . this is the enigmatic aspect of the film. (Preto, 2011, p. 9)

Angelica

Another character that suffers subtle changes throughout the development of the screenplay is the meaning of Angelica's apparition. The passionate drive (the trigger idea that first stimulated Oliveira's imagination), although never entirely disappearing from the film, seems to be replaced by this other stronger and mysterious drive, the 'liberation' *motto*: the deep-down desire for liberation that pushes Isaac towards his own death (or towards Angelica). As Oliveira remarks: "The spirit arrives and saves Isaac from the situation of anguish in which he lived" (Valente, 2011, p. 26).

At the root, in the first three screenplay versions (1954, 1988, 1998), the World War II theme was still present and Isaac's desire for liberation appears to be related to his extreme situation as a fugitive: Because of the nightmare he is immersed in, Isaac turns to Angelica. Later, in the last screenplay version (2010), Isaac's desire for liberation is no longer so attached to his fugitive condition, it becomes more a reaction to yet another extreme situation: He seems to be the only character apparently capable of identifying the imminent extinction of a human fundamental bond, the disappearing of a sacred ritual between man and Earth: The forthcoming replacement of the vineyard diggers by agricultural machinery.

The relationship between Angelica's ghost and the vineyard workers becomes then one of the most important dynamics in the script/film: a mysterious mirroring relationship. The contrast between the documental (the sequences where Isaac photographs the workers in the Douro vineyard hills) and the fantastic pieces (Angelica's ghost episodes, Isaac's dreams) seem to highlight a mysterious affinity. As if the sight of the dead alive (Angelica) would reflect the sight of the living-dead (diggers). Such affinity is not directly expressed in the

screenplay text, but can be sensed or perceived (by the reader) as an allegoric configuration.

As Jean-Philippe Tessé identifies:

The episode of the diggers: It's not just side by side with the story of Angelica, it is its hidden heart [. . .] like an intuition [. . .] there are too many asides not to suspect that an enigma is developing in front of our eyes, that something is hidden in this film, which, in the end, shortly passes by the obsession of Isaac with Angelica. (2011, p. 78)

As Oliveira (1999) once explained: “The fantastic is the shadow of reality” (Baecque & Parsi, p. 58): In the film, the intimate shiver that assails us when we see the apparition of Angelica mirrors something that goes beyond the vision: The eminent disappearance of the vine workers and their gestures, an ancestral relationship between man and earth, an alliance as old as man himself. The entire evolution of *Angelica*'s project is crossed by this strong dynamic established between the ghost of Angelica and the (visible) specters of the diggers: The sound of the diggers invades the space and the scenes with the ghost of Angelica; Angelica's sound leitmotiv invades the space and the images of the diggers. There is a constant crisscrossing in the screenplay between the two motifs: Their episodes, sounds and themes are continuously being intertwined. And the rope, that holds Isaac's photographic work, depicts this cruel relation: The photos of Angelica's corpse mix with the photos of the digger's grimaces, reflecting the mysterious bond that so desperately haunts Isaac. For Isaac it is as if the order of the world came out of its tracks: The living atmosphere of a human ritual – present in the songs of the vine workers, in their living vocabulary, their rituals – is being swallowed by machines and scientific abstractions (the conversations between the engineers at the boarding house breakfast table). Isaac seems to be the only character aware of a change: The perishing of a world of metaphors and sacred gestures, implicit in agricultural physical hard work. According to Simone Weil, “[p]hysical agriculture work was, for a long time, a religious activity par excellence and, consequently, something sacred. Mystery religions of all

pre-Roman antiquity were based entirely on symbolic expressions of soul salvation taken from agriculture” (2014, p. 247). In the 1999 book-interview, by Antoine de Baecque and Jacques Parsi, Manoel de Oliveira’s shares his view:

We live through certain rituals. It is the rituals that make life. [...] out of ignorance, we keep the most superficial parts and leave the most important ones, like the agricultural gestures that have a higher meaning. [...] The original meaning [of rituals] has been lost and only the superficial folklore remains. We lost a lot. (pp. 41- 44)

[Wisdom] is based on the spirit of an experience lived through the centuries. It is not a philosophical abstraction. It is transmitted from generation to generation, thanks to true, authentic knowledge, rooted in life. Western civilization [...] thinks it is on an extraordinary path of progress, and is marching towards the abyss. [...] We must never forget that man, in spite of all the mechanical facilities that he offers himself, is inexorably linked to nature. (p. 129)

Isaac, in the evidence of a catastrophe (the imminent loss of such a bond with Mother Nature), turns in despair to another mother: Death. Angelica then appears as this other *Mater*, who comes to his aid: A “Mythical Death / Represented by a woman / Wrapped in fine transparent white tulle” (Oliveira, 2008). These lines, which reproduce a close characterization of Angélica, are curiously taken from a poem Oliveira once dedicated to the novelist Camilo Castelo. It is not trivial to remember here the affinity with Camilo. Indeed, in *Angélica* project, the Camilian presence is constantly being detected. Sometimes in a more evident manner – one of the books in Isaac’s room is a novel from Camilo Castelo Branco –, in other occasions, Camilo is quoted in a more indirect, subtle, mode, like in the mythological characterization of Angelica. These complex inter-textual crossings are matters which provide, as Adrian Martin recalls, “another instance of the kind of hidden, archeological depth or volume that a film-maker draws upon in shaping his work” (2014, p.19).

Vine workers

Returning to the ‘mortal agony’ theme – as a fight against death that unites humanity in all kind of rituals –, we find that this subject is ultimately reflected in the vine workers’ characterization. In *Angelica*’s first three screenplays, Manoel de Oliveira establishes a contrast between the natural, spiritual, agonic movement of our collective human fight against death and another type of struggle, which is our individual animal instinct for survival: “Parallel to the fight against death [...], people are animated by a very deep instinct, of self-defense, that can turn into aggression [...] people are persecuted by a certain animal instinct. It’s complicated” (Oliveira & Costa, 2008, p. 75). These two different driving forces ruled the first three versions of *Angelica*’s screenplay: The animal instinct – so strongly marked in the vine workers’ characterization – interferes with the sacred side of the human fight, squandering its spiritual charge. Isaac’s unsuccessful efforts to retain (photograph) a memory of a vanishing world (the sacred gestures that bond humans and Earth in a direct expression of faith) is constantly interrupted by the aggressiveness of the workers: “A digger screams with bulging eyes, contracting the face with a wide open mouth, showing his teeth as a wild beast” (1988, p. 48). “A worker straightens up and lets out an animal-like cry with bestiality [. . .] others howl” (1998, p. 48,49).

Later, in the final shooting script/film (2010), the animalistic attitudes of the vine workers (gestures described with animal connotations) fade away. Here, the sacred agonic effort of the vine workers group is also corrupted (we read and understand the abyss in which they fall, enslaved), nevertheless, the force that corrupts them suffers a metamorphosis: The vine diggers are now persecuted and corrupted by another thing (other than the animal instinct), which, according to Oliveira, corresponds to: “The violence of the individual, of the person” (Preto, 2011, p. 6). A violence that arises as the result of a fight from within, implicit in the human condition. A choice that transforms humans not into beasts but into spectral,

lifeless, evil figures like hangmen, zombies: “The photo presents a digger with a hangman expression” (Oliveira, 2010, p. 33).

“The violence of life” (Preto, 2011, p. 6) that once (in the firsts three screenplays) reduced man to beast, becomes then (on the final shooting script) a violence “of the individual”, a violence from within that sprouts from a more transcendental realm. The vine workers become cursed souls, with gestures closer to ones of gravediggers than ones of agricultural workers. In Isaac’s dreams, they haunt him, tormenting his sleep with the sound of their grotesque blows and screams: “There are groans or muffled screams in the OFF like those of the diggers . . . which come from Isaac OFF himself” (Oliveira, 2010, p. 21). It is as if, through such visitations, they were trying to reach and punish Isaac for being aware of the progressive emptiness of their gestures, their obscenity (obscene: Out of scene), the out of the living world in which they fell.

Conclusion

The choices each artist makes are part of the mystery of creation. In *Angelica*, Oliveira, while somber and critical in his portrait (on our relationship with Nature), still, at the end of the story, the writer-director depicts Isaac’s spirit flying away in the arms of Angelica. Moreover, in the end of the shooting script (and only in this version), it is mentioned that a sound motif should run over the credits: the song the diggers sang while working in the fields. You can read: “Here you will begin eventually to hear the singing and the chorus of diggers in OFF” (Oliveira, 2010, p. 48). So it happens in the film: The old melopoeia song of the workers escapes through at the end of the story, as if the sacred bond between humans and Earth, the living rule that connects them, remained somehow alive, bringing a sign of hope for Isaac’s afterlife, since for Oliveira “the essential [in *Angelica*] is Isaac’s destiny” (Preto, 2011, p. 6). Isaac’s melancholic regard, when facing the workers and their gestures (aware of their forthcoming disappearance) and his effort to photograph every single one of them (his

attempt to save their gestures through an image), becomes Isaac's true hypothesis of redemption: His longing may be the milestone that sets his spirit free: the consciousness of a remote affinity, the recognition of a bond, the expectation that we are part of something else, bigger, that connects us with Mother Nature. The whole screenplay development constantly works this liberation *motto*, from the first to the last version. The enigmatic subtitle in brackets – (*Allegory*) – that we read in the shooting script's front page, under the new title *The Strange Case of Angelica* (2010) – is there precisely to remind us “not to be carried away by the literal sense of the apparition [Angelica], but rather to follow its mystery, the allegorical chain⁸ of the film [and screenplay], the myth it carries and lodges” (Benis, 2017a, p. 10).

As we go through the different versions of *Angelica's* project, we can envision the embryonic idea, the essential core of the film, how it survives and conducts the screenplay's project, without ever being fully established in any particular detail. Oliveira stayed faithful to his view, not allowing any historical or financial constraint stop him from making the film as he first envisioned. Along the screenplay readings, it is fascinating to enter Oliveira's intimate space of screenwriting and follow his creative struggle, his search to make a cinematic idea visible, perceptible, as a written text. It is a reading that demands us to be aware of rhythms, and to be able to play with tensions (Angelica/diggers) so as to enter its cinematic appeal; it is an interpretation that calls for comparisons and mostly benefits, if we take into consideration, all the genetics aspects embedded. And by that we speak of things such as: Taking into account the places, like the Douro vines landscape and its bucolic atmosphere, a space-time guided by the cycles of the earth, so familiar to Oliveira; or considering the persons, the ones who had an impact in Oliveira's life and inspired the story, like the Douro vine workers, whom Oliveira contacted and observed for so long; or the trauma brought by the death of his

⁸ Cyril Béghin refers, precisely, that the constant alternation of sequences (Angelica /diggers) “shows a contrast of actions or situations without any casual relationship or temporal simultaneity, but whose approach calls for a comparison, producing an abstract sense, in the way of an allegory” (2013, p. 15).

wife's cousin, or even the imagery of the artists who most influenced him (such as Camilo Castelo Branco, José Régio or Agustina Bessa-Luís); but also bear in mind the political circumstances, like the consequences the Portuguese censorship had on the project, almost voting it to oblivion; and last but not least, the mere chances, like the meeting with producer François D'Artmare, who finally challenged Oliveira to do the film in 2010. Each and every aspect that affected Manoel de Oliveira's creative process helped to shape *Angelica's* screenplay, determining the way its text moved towards the film.

One last word for *Angelica's* amazing screenplay and for Manoel de Oliveira's most unique screenwriting style: Besides all of the thematic development and all the formal graphic changes that occurred along the evolution of the project, one cannot help to notice the extraordinary amount of beautiful fragments of text. Lyrical excerpts that are intrinsic parts of the screenplay and not a decorative devise. Poetic, extremely suggestive passages that enrich the reading in its cinematic complexion. Like this single simple sentence directing the way Isaac should step into the olive tree hill: "Isaac, slowing his steps, advances, gently, as if entering a cathedral" (Oliveira, 1954, p. 81). It was Goethe, who very opportunely gave us this precious exhortation: He "who wishes to understand the poet / Must go to the poet's land" (2010[1819], p. 329). This is certainly the best advice when studying Manoel de Oliveira's (or any other film poet's) screenwriting work.

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