TIME AND MOVEMENT IN THE PROCESS OF FILM MAKING: *AN APPROXIMATION TO THE GENETIC CRITICISM OF COSTUME DESIGN IN RAÚL RUIZ'S "MYSTERIES OF LISBON"*

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ABSTRACT

This article presents the concept of genetic criticism as it reflects upon the artistic processes intrinsic to filmmaking. More specifically, it sheds light on some of the costume design and art direction practices observed in Portuguese cinema. In an effort to posit a theoretical model that fits this sphere of practice, it focuses on a specific film, an individual art director and a range of corresponding preproduction materials, to elucidate the process of materialisation that starts with the script and ends with some form of physical appearance inside the frame. Accordingly, a range of materials has been selected, all conceived by Isabel Branco for Raúl Ruiz's "Mysteries of Lisbon" (2010).
Genetic criticism's approach to filmmaking presupposes a re-evaluation of the final cut as the only conceivable art object, inasmuch as its methodology implies the investigation of creative process and creators' motivations. With genetic criticism, time and movement become key concepts for the understanding of filmmaking processes.

KEYWORDS: PORTUGUESE CINEMA; COSTUME DESIGN; GENETIC CRITICISM; CREATIVE PROCESSES; PROCESS DOCUMENTS.

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Genetic criticism and film.

Genetic criticism started in France, in 1968, with the work of Louis Hay and Almuth Grésillon. In 1985, it was introduced in Brazil by Philippe Willemart[1]. This Portuguese-language development, set up in the form of *Centro de estudos em crítica genética at Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo* [*Centre for genetic criticism studies, Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo*], overseen by Cecilia Salles[2], has encouraged a degree of interest in the arts, including film.

If the aim of genetic criticism has always been, from the start, to apprehend the process of literary construction, and its object of study the footprints left by the writer in the manuscript, then it should, necessarily, breach the literary barrier and amplify its limits beyond the word (Salles 2002, 62)[3].

Genetic criticism's approach to the visual arts focuses on the examination of material records left by artists during the creative process (drafts, sketches, notes, drawings). It enables the materialisation of a *morphology of creation*[4], maintaining all the initial and developmental perspectives contained in the documents, and opening the doors to such challenging concepts as an *aesthetics of the unfinished*.

Salles' words (2000, 63) point to a methodological appropriateness, intrinsic to genetic criticism, for the study of documents emerging from all forms of artistic expression. Hence, towards the end of the nineteen nineties, following an initial strand of investigations more attuned with semiotic studies, a new generation of researchers started to focus on different areas such as film, the visual arts, architecture, journalism and advertising[5].

In the case of film, it is obvious how genetic research must always strive for interdisciplinarity. The various departments that help materialise a film all speak different expressive languages: from storyboarding, clipping and collage aided scripting and development, to the actual materials trialled and used in set design (fabric samples, mock-ups, etc).

The screenplay was one of the first cinematic materials to be studied. Moreover, the elements that fall under the scope of genetic criticism are the material records of a process, chronological portraits of a genesis indexing a course of action (Salles, 2002, 63)[6].

Given the need for adequacy across a range of fields, the word "draft", which had served the study of literature and literary materials, became unbefitting. With the expansion of genetic criticism's scope to include the visual arts, all materials under scrutiny started to be called "process documents".

Before the emergence of this methodology, research into the work of art had been mostly directed towards the final stage and product.

Probing the documents that result from the creative process, far from replacing art criticism, carries the power to increase knowledge of the artwork, remaining faithful to its purpose. The work is, above all else, the element that propels genetic studies: if it did not exist, interest would cease in trying to understand its mode of fabrication (Salles 2000, 3)[7].

Genetic criticism implies an attentiveness to the journey as much as the destination. It is rare that, for an artist, an artwork will appear finished: his or her vision is often that a complete and final stage does not exist. One only needs to remember the last few steps in the editing of a film: there is often a range of "final cuts" before one is selected to be premiered in the cinemas – and time and again a series of versions, all equally deemed the "final cut", will subsist.

This method of unified research agitates those waters of theoretical reflection that are based upon the traditional conception of the work of art locked in the excellence of its final form – those notions of "aesthetics" linked to ideas of perfection and consummation. What if each and every phase in the creative process could be perceived as one in a series of possible final stages?

[1] In 2008, professor Cecilia Salles has mapped the complete history of genetic criticism in her book "Crítica Genética: Fundamento dos estudos genéticos sobre o processo de criação artística".

[2] The Centre for genetic criticism studies at *PUC/SP* fosters an interdisciplinary approach, structured around a semiotics of Peircean disposition.

[3] "Se o propósito direcionador dos estudos genéticos foi, desde seu início, a compreensão do processo de construção de uma obra literária e de seu objeto de estudo eram as pegadas do escritor encontradas nos manuscritos, deveria necessariamente romper a barreira da literatura e ampliar seus limites para além da palavra."

This notion first appears in the book "Gesto inacabado. Processo de criação artística", dated 1998, by Cecilia Salles.

[5] The rise of a new line of diversely trained researchers is documented in the article "Comunicação em processo", dated 2002, by Cecilia Salles.

[6] "[R]egistos materiais do processo, retratos temporais de uma gênese que agem como índices do percurso."

[7] "A analise dos documentos dos processos criativos dos artistas, longe de substituir a critica de arte, tem o poder de adensar o conhecimento relativo à obra, sendo fiel a seu propósito. A obra é, antes de mais nada, o elemento propulsor dos estudos genéticos: se não existisse a obra, não haveria o interesse de compreender seu modo de fabricação."

It is a fact that hardly any critical research has been produced around the mechanisms of production and artistic creation in portuguese cinema. Grasping the role played by artistic imagination is one of the goals of genetic criticism. The process of unearthing ideas inscribed in any language must be accompanied by the study of related documentation, for these records become the temporal portraits of a genesis (Salles 2002, 63)[8].

The target is therefore the work of art, but only insofar as it results from a process of progressive transformation that demands from the artist an investment in time, dedication and discipline (Salles 2000, 1)[9].

This new perspective entails a rethinking of the artwork in terms of an "aesthetics of creation".

In the case of cinema, the final film is confronted with the stages of what it was during the process of making[10], with every phase becoming the possible culmination of a conceivable work. The sheer notion of consummation is relativized, along with the idea of a single path or journey determined from the start.

Accordingly, a research methodology focused on the application of such concepts to the practices that bore the filmic object becomes structured by movement and time, approaching the cinema by way of its constructional flux and material indicators.

Still on the question of intersection between the initial script and the editing stage, before reflecting on the latter, genetic criticism will consider the 'unchartered' versions that form the genesis of written and visual narrative. These versions exist thanks to drawings, sketches, notes, etc. They are the early phases of an 'ideal editing', long before we reach the postproduction stage.

The application of genetic criticism's techniques to filmmaking practices implies the identification of other "ideal editors", already from the stage of preproduction. Their artistic recognition resides in the work they contribute of elaborating and giving form to ideas in conjunction with the director.

If we conceive the material editing of a film as a horizontal process, with a beginning and a possible end, we then need to interpret the actions of those who create this 'ideal preproduction editing' as a vertical development. The suggestions on lighting, settings, actors, props, etc, all assemble vertically and only occasionally will they penetrate the horizontal plane of the final cut. So, what happens to the all the creative lines which did not dovetail with the concluding vision?

Genetic criticism and costume design.

The focus of attention here is the process by which something that did not exist materialises, out of certain qualities that someone provides it. The artistic artefact emerges from a complex process of appropriations, transformations and adjustments. The genetic critic strives to penetrate the complexity of this process. The great question driving genetic studies forward is the texture in this movement (Salles 1998, 13)[11].

With the attention given by genetic criticism to "film costume", a connection between cinema and texture arises, routing directly to material questions closely linked with apparel.

Film texture emerges with the script and, together with other different fields, materialises through the research work of costume designers. The final product is but a possible outcome amongst others: from interpreting the script to fitting out a character, such is the creative arch of costume design. The sketches and notes of costume designers, especially those left behind in the process of constructing a film, are the material imprint of concepts at the root of artistic creation.

Process documents are, therefore, the material records of creative development. They are the temporal portraits of a commencement, acting as indexes of the creative journey. We know that the mental phenomenon materialised in the records is directly inaccessible, but then these can be conceived as its mode of physical manifestation. The creative process is directly unattainable,

[8] "[R]etratos temporais de uma gênese".

[9] "[Como] o resultado de um trabalho que se carateriza por transformação progressiva, que exige, por parte do artista, investimento de tempo, dedicação e disciplina."

[10] The materialisation of a film can extend to a year or more. From scriptwriting to preproduction, production and postproduction, many are the stages involved in the transformation of an idea.

[11] "O foco de atenção é o processo por meio do qual algo que não existia antes, como tal, passa a existir, a partir de determinadas características que alguém vai lhe oferecendo. Um artefacto artístico surge ao longo de um processo complexo de apropriações, transformações e ajustes. O crítico genético procura entrar na complexidade desse processo. A grande questão que impulsiona os estudos genéticos é compreender a tessitura desse movimento."

since only a few indexes exist. These are the traces that we interpret as the material testimony of a creative process (Salles 1998, 17)[12].

In film, we regard the work of costume design as one of the processes of artistic creation which remain closer to the actor, to his or her body and to the 'casing' that will transform him or her in the figure idealised by the director[13].

In Portugal the word *figurinista* [costume designer] seldom makes an appearance in the filmmaking lexicon, as it is generally replaced by the more generic and object-oriented *guarda-roupa* [literally, wardrobe]. In line with current research, the word "wardrobe" is deemed deficient for its inability to truly address the process of costume creation (design and conception, the externalisation of a character's attitudes and feelings, etc), and its accent on the designer as one who merely systematises a range of garments and accessories. Before this "wardrobe" materialisation, a whole phase of artistic creation will have to happen first, one focused on textile expression and contextualisation.

The investigation of a costume designer's work relies on the documents emerging from the creative process.

In Portugal, one of the reasons for such terminological muddle is the fact that little artistic merit is customarily credited to the job of costume design from the very first stages of creation. The little time granted to artistic expression by strict and conventionalist production rules precludes the full manifestation of an artistic and conventional expression.

Usually, in such instances when the role of costume design has been recognised and valued, a whole range of preproduction documents will have emerged that are kept and listed, granting the researcher the opportunity to study them as a feature of the film's material history. The illustrations, sketches and notes produced by costume designers can then be published in critical anthologies or thematic editions.

Although in Portugal there is little tradition of preserving this type of documentation as part of a film's memory, it is still common that costume designers will meticulously preserve their individual records with the aim of reusing such work in any subsequent projects. However, it is often the case that, after a while, such materials will no longer exist, given the large amounts which designers typically accumulate.

In 2017[14] a project was launched to map interviews by costume designers who work or have worked in Portuguese cinema, complemented by the photographic recording of materials used in the filmmaking process. This project employs an oral history methodology in an attempt to reconstruct a collective memory of costume design in filmmaking.

It starts with an investigation of the artistic processes employed by costume designers in Portuguese cinema and with the conscience that a great volume of material has already been lost: what remains is rich in detail and can amount to an interesting research object.

"Mysteries of Lisbon": a case study.

When producer Paulo Branco offered Raúl Ruiz Camilo Castelo Branco's book *Mistérios de Lisboa* (1856) ["Mysteries of Lisbon"], little did he know that his gesture would ignite one of the most highly regarded features in recent Portuguese cinema, but also, and rather regrettably, the last of his own films the Chilean director would personally ever see premiered (Ruiz died in 2011).

According to Giorgio Agamben, the act of delivering a text, for instance by such an important figure as a producer, demonstrates that cinema, before it becomes image, is already gesture. In a film's material history, this action marks the embryonic stage of the creative process, belonging to the order of ethics and politics as much as it pertains to the realm of aesthetics we have been discussing up until now.

What characterises gesture is that it is not produced nor acted, but assumed and supported. It thus opens up the sphere of *ethos* as the most fittingly human. But in what way can a gesture be assumed and supported? In what way does a *res* become a *res-gesta*, a simple fact become an event? (G. Agamben, 1996).

[12] "Os documentos de processo são, portanto, registros materiais do processo criador. São retratos temporais de uma génese que agem como índices do percurso criativo. Estamos conscientes que não temos acesso direto ao fenómeno mental que os registros materializam, mas estes podem ser considerados a forma física através da qual esse fenómeno se manifesta. Não temos, portanto, o processo de criação em mãos, mas apenas alguns índices desse processo. São vestígios vistos como testemunho material de uma criação em processo."

[13] For a contextualisation of the role of costume design in Portuguese cinema, see Cucinotta, C., "Viagem ao cinema através do seu vestuário", Covilhã, 2018.

[14] The project arose as part of Caterina Cucinotta's postdoctoral research project "Figurinos e textura espacial: design e arte no Cinema Português dos últimos 50 anos", supported by *Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia*, and also as part of Nivea Faria de Souza's doctoral research project "Entre a escrita e a imagem: A criação de arte na visualidade cênica", supported by *PDSE/CAPES*. Thirteen professionals were interviewed, amongst costume designers, costume supervisors, assistants and seamstresses.

Gesture, the Italian philosopher continues, is, in this sense: communication and communicability. In itself, it has nothing to say, because what it shows us is Man's being-in-language as pure means of communication. But given that this being-in-language cannot be spoken in the form of propositions, gesture is, in essence, always the act of not finding a way through language. (G. Agamben, 1996).

Consistent with Agamben's position, the presence of gesture in film generates an instance of non-verbal communication between two or more interlocutors. In this case, between writer, producer and director.

And here it is the materialisation that extends beyond aesthetics to become also political: the passage from res to res-gesta, from fact to event. Between reading the book and adapting for film or television: from the twenty or so hours of footage impetuously imagined by Raúl Ruiz, a six episodes TV series of 52 minutes each was created in 2010, and a feature was produced for the cinema, extending to little over four and a half hours.

Thus, out of the work that all artists and professionals delivered in creating the film's audio-visual element we focus here, for the first time, on a selection of costumes and set design elements fashioned by Isabel Branco, which we intersect with a reading of the screenplay adaptation of Castelo Branco's novel.

Our aim is less a finer understanding of the finished work "Mysteries of Lisbon" than a theoretical journey through the genesis of the film, focused on its art direction.

According to the latest research on the topic, in Portuguese cinema, "art direction" encompasses both set and costume design. Such is the case with this film, with Isabel Branco assuming the role of art director, mutually responsible for costumes and set design.

Isabel Branco and image construction.

It is specifically with the following case study, centred on the domain of costume design for film, that we hope to shed some light on the process by which genetic criticism engages with the creative process of filmmaking. Although Isabel Branco's art direction notebooks, which she calls "books", grant us such an interesting variety of research clues, for the purpose of this article we have decided to concentrate on just a few[15].

These "books" assist the need to record notes, ideas, impressions, words, etc. According to Branco, this practice starts with reading the script, and surveying the characters, situations and moods that populate it. The notebook is the portable platform for all kinds of records (Salles 2000, 5)[16] . It serves the process of critically reflecting upon the screenplay.

Other artists from other departments will complete the film's general vision: we have before us a collective form of artistic creation. Researching the different viewpoints that converge on a single object: presenting what results from script-writer and director's ideas. The importance of notebooks as a form of documentation results from the need to register the historical and visual references that will be adopted in the formation of a character and its placement in a particular setting. Isabel Branco's images reveal a unique vision of both the profession and this particular project. They expose the art director's creative style.

In 2017[17], professor Lúcia Nagib also displayed an interest in Branco's art direction work for "Mysteries of Lisbon". Her article "Mysteries of Lisbon and Intermedial History-Telling"[18] relates the methodology used by the art director when working on the production and discovery of ambiances that could convey the concept of "mystery".

To the question of "Why in a film titled "Mysteries of Lisbon" we never see the city itself?", the art director replies that, given the great earthquake of 1755, the film is set in a city that no longer exists, and which could never successfully be refashioned as a "town" in the current urban setting we now identify as ours.

From a stylistic choice taken in agreement with the director is born the idea of recreating paintings and panels as the "authentic" scenography that supports the action.

This solution is also justified by Branco with the fact that Ruiz wanted to scrupulously follow writer Camilo Castelo Branco's indications for a serialised novel.

[15] Isabel Branco is one of thirteen costume designers we interviewed in 2017. Branco's personal collection of non-filmic materials (notebooks), which originate from her work as costume designer or art director, is one of the largest from this pool of interviewees representing the last three decades of film production in Portugal.

[16] "[S]uportes moveis de registos de toda a ordem".

[17] This interview was kindly conceded by Isabel Branco to the author and has not yet been published.

[18] See, "Aniki" vol. 2, no. 4, 2017.

Therefore, when we talk about scenography, we largely mean the daily life of characters within the four walls of their homes.

It was more about reconstructing the day-to-day life of the city, its story – a bit like Camilo did – than showing a town which no longer resembles any of that. I think the film wants to tell what happens between the characters, the feuilleton is more like a *telenovela* [television soap opera] (Isabel Branco, 2017)[19].

Starting from this choice of art direction, a process begins to define interiors that are recreated in conformity with historical knowledge, vis-à-vis the exteriors that remain unaltered and which can only echo our current period.

A comparatist analysis crossing process documents with film sequences will mark the fact that such notebooks are full of the historical, literary and social indications that structure the creative process. Not necessarily those which will become central to the action, but vertical lines that impact help shape the horizontal narrative.

In 2017, in the course of our interview, while glancing through her notebooks, Isabel Branco acknowledged that she draws "situations"[20]. This underlines how the materialisation of creative ideas is always profoundly coupled with the unfolding of the plot and linked to cinematography and shot selection. Branco's notations act like a thread connecting actions with lighting and gestures.

Countess Ângela's wardrobe

Directly linked to the configuration of ambiences is the intricate work of costume design. In fact, the two always work jointly as one: this is evident in the "situations" conceived by Isabel Branco, which reveal a complete viewpoint on each shot. (Fig.1)

One notices, for instance, how in the drawing illustrated above the few lines that exist perfectly define the type of framing envisaged by Raúl Ruiz. One notices also how the sketches that describe the characters so obviously illustrate the camera's viewpoint and condense the unfolding of the narrative. Physically, they appear as ballpoint scribbles. However, one can recognise, amongst others, Father Dinis,

João as a child and Ângela, glancing through the window. This reflects Ângela's first encounter with her son. Despite the sketchy nature of such impressions, it is easy to associate the final shot with the initial art direction idea.

Amongst all the characters, emphasis must be given to Ângela, Countess of Santa Bárbara, for how her style is progressively

[19] "Foi mais reconstruir o dia a dia da cidade, reconstruir o folhetim da cidade - um bocadinho como o Camilo - do que mostrar propriamente a cidade que já não tem nada de parecido. Eu acho que o filme quer contar o que se passa entre as pessoas, o folhetim é mais uma telenovela."

[20] "Eu desenho situações".

dispossessed of colour and form, until her final appearance dressed in a nun's habit. (Fig.2)

Colours are a fundamental element in equipoising sets and costumes: in these three shots, there is a continuity between the green of the décor and the green Ângela is wearing. The Countess's emaciated look agrees with the green of her dress and the accessories outlining the mouldy gradations on the walls.

Genetic criticism underlines the idea that nothing in costume design is left to chance. Research will gain depth and meaning as preproduction materials, process documents and film sequences are examined together. This kind of genetic study will be less concerned with costume in film than with the materials that unveil the methods which led to the meticulous composition of figures, characters, etc.

In the words of Janes Gaines, the manufacture of costumes is firmly implanted in the film production as a whole:

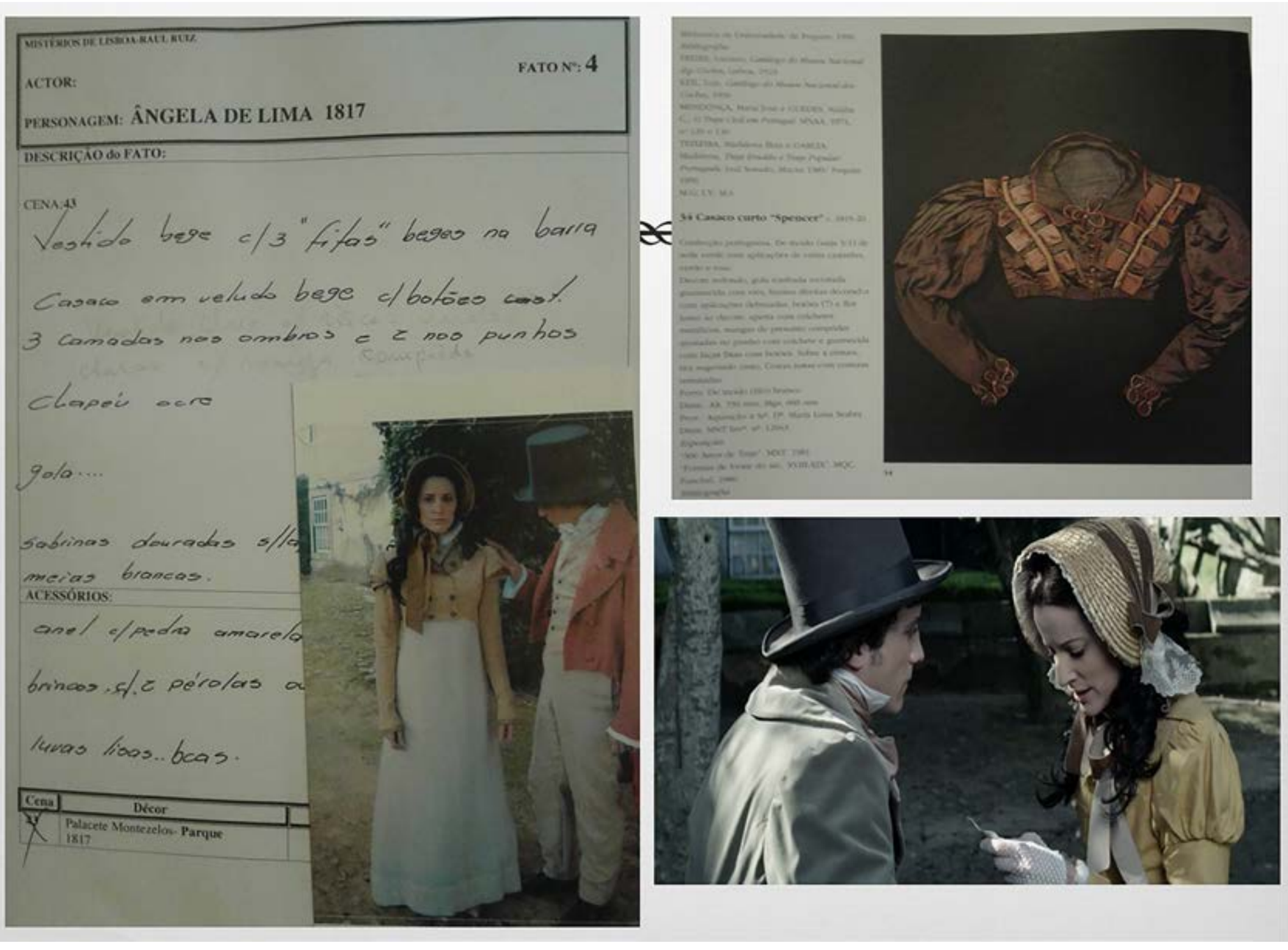
Their significance naturalised, costumes become imperceptible, imparting the unintentional sensation that the characters are just clothed, that if on the one hand the they can be eye-catching, on the other they are just accessories, or even something completely detached from the narrative project that lies beneath (Gaines, 1990;192)[21].

From the clippings produced by the costume design team out of a range of fashion history book pages, one can make out the first study about Countess Ângela's character. Clippings which, in a second instance, will be inspected by the director, so that the process of modelling the characters can be materialised. (Fig.3)

[21] "Naturalizados no significado deles, os figurinos tornam-se impercetíveis e a sensação incônscia que obtemos é de que as personagens só vestem uns fatos, que se por um lado são vistosos, parecem simplesmente acessórios ou até completamente alheios ao projeto narrativo de fundo."

This is an important stage in the filmmaking process. The narrative references in Castelo Branco's novel are cross-checked with the historical elements researched by the costume design team. For, up to this point, the material forms of any character had remained sealed in the imaginings of writer and director.

The notebooks also contain a study of Ângela's youth, detailing the matching of "empire style" dresses with "Spencer" cardigans. The character's image derives from the creative study of early nineteenth century European ladies, as this type of outfit was normally reserved for the upper-class demoiselle (the Spencer cardigan was manufactured explicitly for the young and wealthy). (Fig.4) The lighter tones symbolise a lack of experience and a lightness of spirit which will be progressively lost as the plot develops, until all colour fades into a nun's habit. Thus, genetic analysis will have helped to



contextualise the creative process starting with the study of a simple empire style dress.

Colour is full of mystery. When we are making a film, the definitions of colours observe the era we live in, the epoch it is set in and the historical circumstances of that moment. Colour, in truth, is the function of emotion, of what we want to say (C. Bueno in Hamburger 2014, 142)[22].

The sum of all the events which led to specific choices is clearly discernible in the process documents. In terms of materialisation, stylistic continuity never breaks the plot or distracts the spectator from the main narrative. Costume and ambiences coexist in total harmony within the frame. This extreme stylistic coherence results from the extensive visual research work patent in Isabel Branco's notebooks.

After examining the notebooks, the study of art direction acquires enough momentum to be able to present a conclusion about the film's visual construction.

Throughout the film, one can notice a certain opposition between costumes and exterior ambiances. In the final shot, the garden walls, the facades of palaces and the actual vegetation surrounding the houses appear "un-designed" – these ambiences have not been painted or received any improvements. (Fig.5)

Costume design, rather contrastingly, has received far greater attention. While the ambiances were the right milieu for the fabrication of mystery, the garments were primarily conceived to enhance the story.

It is palpable the greater attention given to costume design when compared with the décor. If the film is animated by an actor embodying a character, so are the costumes themselves, which only then gain life. If the characters change with the passage of time, the garments will closely follow this transformation. But the places, the settings, will remain the same.

In this regard, an element absent from the process documents are the film's interior settings. Still, it is the walls of salons, bedrooms and studies that transmit this sense of mystery: mouldy, tarnished, full of cracks, revealing the passage of time. (Fig.6)

According to Clovis Bueno, it is this type of stylistic choice that links the present of filming with the past of the epoch it re-enacts. It is as action unfolds inside these walls that the marks there left on purpose amplify the vivid colours of the costumes.

Genetic analysis of the film's documentation points to Clovis Bueno's three variants,

[22] "A cor é uma coisa cheia de mistério. Quando estamos fazendo um filme, as definições de cores somam-se à época em que vivemos, à época em que se passa o filme e à circunstância da história naquele momento. A cor, na verdade, é função da emoção, do que se quer dizer."

which, in this case, result from the orchestration of rapid action with the fixity of the locations.

The quickness of action is furnished by the vast research work put into costume design. These are new items of clothing, tailor-made from scratch much like they would have been in the period portrayed by the film. The motionlessness of places, on the contrary, is given by the stylistic election of stasis. Immaculate and elegant costumes stand out against decadent exteriors.

Conclusion: towards an aesthetics of the unfinished.

Genetic criticism's processual outlook helps renovate film studies. "Untangling" the various components at the origin of a film's "practical" development allows for a discrete treatment of each and their demarcation as research objects, receptive to observation and analysis.

Each component presupposes a line of vertical research that will meet the horizontal contours of the initial idea. Many of these will remain as concepts and fail to materialise into concrete objects.

This is the fundamental point of genetic criticism: to shed light on these vertical ideas, contextualised by a study of the creative process's documents. It is this mobile critical study, based upon the concept of uncompletedness, that tries to inverse the immobile temporality of the complete and concluded work of art. Contact with materiality during this process reveals the variation of possible states in a morphology of creation.

Thus, a two-prong dialogue is established between the study of specific artists and a wider theorisation about the nature of the creative act (Salles 2000, 2)

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