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Right on the edge: Europe's westernmost hotel and Wim Wenders' *The State of Things*

Gn 8. 4. And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat.¹

With its lobby located at 38°49'2"N and 9°28'32"W, the Arribas Hotel at Portugal's Praia Grande is Europe's most occidental purpose-built hotel facility.² It was the stage for the shooting of *The State of Things*, which the director Wim Wenders started 40 years ago and premiered at the 1982 Venice Film Festival. This work, by the Düsseldorf-born director, is a "movie-within-a-movie" which portrays a film crew that is making a sci-fi film called *The Survivors* in the Sintra-Lisbon, but run out of money and film-stock, and become stranded in the derelict hotel where they are quartered. In the film, a monologue by the character Robert (Geoffrey Carey), set inside a motel bedroom, echoes Wenders' attraction to the location:

Lisbon, anyway... Yeah! 'Cidade de Amor'... It's really right on the edge. Far-western corner of Europe. The same ocean. All this water. Right in front of my window. Kinda... scary. And that's the whole... Where the land runs out and the sea comes in. Could wash us all away. With a big wave, baby.

The location for Wim Wenders' first film in Portugal – MY SUGGESTION

Wenders had never filmed in Portugal before, and his visit to the country was quite accidental. His companion at the time, Isabelle Weingarten, was starring in *Le Territoire*, a film being shot by Chilean director Raúl Ruiz in the nearby Sintra forest. Weingarten had told Wenders about troubles they were facing:

They had run out of [film] stock and there was a chance the filming would have to be suspended. It happened that we had a few rolls in a fridge in Berlin, and so...I set off for Lisbon to see Isabelle and give Raúl the film...and here, in the forest of Sintra they were working calmly and easily, under no pressure. Only they didn't have any money. I stayed on, I went for walks, and on one of them I saw this deserted hotel that had been wrecked by a storm or hurricane the winter before. It looked like a beached whale.³

Wenders' screenplay, the film's locale and the use of black-and-white film merged into a proclamation of sorts on European v American cinema. Wenders touches on this in the short documentary *Reverse Angle*, also from 1982: "A more precise examination of that difference is the film I made last year, during an eight-month break in the shooting of *Hammert*," he says. "This film is called *The State of Things*, and it ends in a caravan going up and down Hollywood Boulevard all night long."⁴ In his acceptance speech for the 1991 Murnau Prize, Wenders

¹ Book of Genesis, *King James' Bible*.

² There is another seaside hotel on the opposite side of the Sintra mountain ridge, the Hotel do Guincho, located at a similar longitude. However, the Guincho occupies a 17th-century fortress, making the Arribas (meaning 'cliffs') Europe's westernmost hotel built from scratch.

³ Wim Wenders, 'Le Souffle de l'Ange', in *The Logic of Images. Essays and conversations* (London & Boston, MA: Faber & Faber, 1992 - first published in German in 1988), p 103.

⁴ Wim Wenders, 'Reverse Angle: New York City, March 1982', in *The Logic of Images. Essays and conversations*, p 22.

explains that it was not a coincidence “that the film begins in Europe, at the most westerly point of Portugal, where Europe sticks its nose out to America.”⁵

As the cast of *The State of Things* unravels in the film’s opening titles, one might venture a major star is missing: the building of the Arribas itself, where the stranded crew in the film-within-the-film is lodged, and where most of its scenes are shot. The hotel was also where an interview with its director, by the article author, took place, on 23 November 2019:

Might we say The State of Things would never have come to be if this building didn’t exist?

Yeah. I liked the idea of making a film here after I met Raul and his crew, but they were shooting in the forest. The film was called *The Territory* and a lot of it was in the forest. And I liked the way they treated each other and I liked the crew and Raul worked very quietly and gently. And I also liked the metaphor of that situation that they had run out of film and couldn’t go on anymore. But I wouldn’t want... I didn’t want to shoot in the forest, so I was thinking I needed to find another place that fitted the situation better. And I started to drive around, and I’d only had a week here, and on the second or third day of driving around I came by this road here... and I saw the hotel like a stranded whale... on the beach.

The swimming pool had huge holes, the hotel was closed then, it was too damaged at the time. And I realised right away, that was the place I’d been looking for.

And then I basically wrote the whole situation for that hotel and all the actors would live [in it] and everybody would have a room, and they’re all staying together in the bar, and they would just be lost... On this Western part of Europe – and that was a metaphor I liked a lot. So you’re totally right!...If I hadn’t found the hotel, I probably hadn’t made that movie.

Wenders might never have filmed in Portugal if it had not been for the Arribas. His sensitivity to locations is evident in his use of other buildings in his films: consider the memorable footage from the Berlin Library by Hans Scharoun (1893–1972) in *Das Himmel Über Berlin*, or from the lobby of the former Cinema Éden in Lisbon by the celebrated Portuguese architect Cassiano Branco (1897–1970), which Wenders adapted into a railway station hall (supposedly in Moscow!) in his 1991 film *Until the End of the World*.

Wenders spoke of his concerns with architecture and cities in a conversation with Hans Kolhoff, published in the journal *Quaderns d’Arquitectura i Urbanisme* in 1988. “Architects who are interested in city planning ought to know something about paintings and music and cinema,” he said.⁶ His interest in this area also led him to produce a 3D documentary, *Cathedrals of Culture*, on a number of remarkable buildings around the world. This premiered at the 64th Berlin International Film Festival in February 2014, two months before the tragic death of one of its segment directors, Michael Glawogger. In the film’s opening segment, directed and written by Wenders, he asserts that “buildings...have more influence on the world than you let yourself think”. Wenders selected Scharoun’s other major Berlin opus – the

⁵ Wim Wenders, ‘I’m at Home Nowhere’, acceptance speech for the Murnau Prize, Bielefeld, 17 March 1991, in *The Act of Seeing. Essays and Conversations* (London and Boston, MA: Faber & Faber, 1997 - first published in German in 1992), p 172.

⁶ Wim Wenders, ‘Find Myself a City to Live in’, conversation with Hans Kolhoff, in *The Act of Seeing: Essays and Conversations*, p 102.

city's Philharmonic Music Hall – for this part of the documentary, supposedly after hesitating between it and its neighbouring library, also designed by Scharoun. Wenders' eye for buildings and locations is also evident in his 1994 *Lisbon Story*. In this film, he lands the BMW Isetta that the character Friedrich Monreau (Patrick Bauchau) is shacking in next to the giant 1972 social housing block nicknamed 'The Pink Panther', designed by architects Gonçalo Byrne and António Reis Cabrita.

The Arribas, pre-Wenders

I said to myself: you've got everything you need to make a film here. The ocean, a fantastic location, the most westerly point in Europe – the nearest point to America... I asked Henri Alekan and Raoul's crew and actors if they'd be prepared to stay on and make another film the moment *Le Territoire* was finished. They all said of course; no one really took me seriously.⁷

Praia das Maças ('Apple Beach') lies a kilometer north of Praia Grande and started receiving summer bathers in the early 20th century. These grew in numbers as the small electric tramway from Sintra was extended, in 1904, to the beach as its final stop. The actors Geoffrey Carey and Patrick Bauchau can be seen here an hour into *The State of Things*. Praia Grande, however, was a secret spot accessed by a footpath known to few, most of whom, according to the local weekly *Jornal de Sintra*, were foreign tourists.⁸ The sand-strip of the Praia Grande lay directly at the foot of the hills (as seen in a 1944 aerial survey photograph of the site), until Alfredo Nunes Coelho, a plumbing contractor from the nearby village of Colares, got the idea to develop a touristic venture at the beach. Coelho had been doing work on a number of weekend houses in the area, mostly belonging to architects (the site was known as 'the architects' district').⁹

According to his family, Coelho had set up a part-time seafood restaurant in a rudimentary shack around 1943 on the spot where he later built the Arribas Motel.¹⁰ In 1954, he established a firm to run the bathhouses and small commercial facilities he had built at Praia Grande and the adjoining Praia Pequena (meaning 'Small Beach'), catering to new beachgoers. This company was called the United Lifeguard Society Ltd ('Sociedade de Banheiros Reunidos Lda'), run with a number of lifeguards from the area. Coelho improved access to the beach by laying out a macadam road, which was later named after him. It had already been asphalted by the time Wim Wenders made his film.

In 1959, Coelho submitted a proposal to the local authorities for a hotel to be built at Praia Grande.¹¹ This came to be the original Hotel Arribas, a four-floor facility with a roof terrace portico. The architect was not chosen by chance: Raúl Francisco Tojal (1900–1969), who had

⁷ Wim Wenders, *Le Souffle de l'Ange*, p.104.

⁸ Félix Correia, 'A Praia Grande. A Grande Praia do Futuro', in *Jornal de Sintra*, 1357, 13 March 1960, pp. 1&7.

⁹ 'Um Perfil e uma Obra. Um homem e uma Praia', in: *Vida Mundial*, 1468, 28 July 1967, pp. 38-40.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Processes 1129/59 and 6593/59, Sintra Municipal Archive.

built himself a summer house nearby in 1942, had been one of the few regulars walking down to bathe at Praia Grande, along with his brother, the contractor Diamantino Tojal. The latter had partnered with the construction company Alves Ribeiro (which remains one of the biggest Portuguese building firms today) in building a public seawater swimming pool at Praia das Maças, for Turismo Sintra Litoral S.A.R.L., of which he was also a shareholder¹². The venture, inaugurated on 7 July 1956, was designed by his brother Raúl, in partnership with the prolific architect and urbanist João Guilherme Faria da Costa (1906–1971)¹³, following a somewhat Californian streamlined look, complete with its Concha [meaning ‘conch’] Restaurant.

According to the *Jornal de Sintra*, the Arribas Hotel was inaugurated a day before the Praia das Maças pool, and only a fortnight later, the same newspaper reported that ‘Alfredo Coelho is thinking about giving the [Praia Grande] beach a seawater swimming-pool’.¹⁵ In January 1963, Coelho submitted a proposal to the municipality for a 100m-pool, an adjoining building with dressing rooms, showers, toilets and a snack-bar on the upper level, to be constructed on the northern tip of the Praia Grande. He did so under the pretext that such a pool would be a safety improvement for beachgoers, considering the rough sea conditions at Praia Grande.

The project, which was also designed by Raúl Tojal, was visualised in a spectacular drawing of the motel’s enormous pool, which is shaped like a giant surfboard.¹⁶ Tojal was on his way to becoming the most successful hotel designer in Portugal of his time. His achievements in the hospitality business included the Hotel Embaixador in Lisbon, which opened on 21 June 1956, and the Hotel Algarve, which was the first modern touristic venture in that part of Portugal, and was inaugurated on 11 June 1967 by the then-president, Américo Tomás. Tojal’s greatest accomplishment, however, was the Hotel Estoril-Sol, which opened to the public in 1965 (also in the presence of President Tomás). With 21 floors and 404 bedrooms and suites, the Estoril-Sol was the largest hotel ever built in Portugal, but it was brought down in 2007 and replaced by a luxury housing development designed by the same Gonçalo Byrne who had done the Pink Panther social-housing block.

By May 1963, Alfredo Coelho was already submitting a modified project for the pool, now pairing Raúl Tojal with Manuel Coutinho de Carvalho as its architects, to replace the previously approved design. These plans added a third floor to the building while also tripling its previously approved construction volume. It now had bathhouses, toilets, a bar, a medical station, storage rooms and locker rooms on the swimming pool-level; toilets, a spa and plenty of changing rooms (quite appropriate for a time when people would not head to a pool in swimwear and flip-flops) on the floor above it; and a self-service restaurant and a ballroom on the top floor, which had separate entrances from the lower-floor circuit. The motel’s decoration, which unfortunately has been mostly replaced over time, was custom-made, as

¹² Deed for establishment of ‘Turismo Sintra Litoral, S.A.R.L.’, in *Diário do Governo*, III Series, 1, 3 January 1955, pp. 7-8.

¹³ Félix Correia, *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Anon. ‘Hotel Arribas’, in *Jornal de Sintra*, 1422, 8 June 1961, p.1.

¹⁶ However, this is likely to be a coincidence, since surfing and surfboards were probably unknown to the hotel developer and the architect at the time. Today, surfers are found at the Praia Grande all year round.

were all its sunshades. The self-service restaurant may have been the first of its kind in Portugal.¹⁷

After securing approval in January 1965, Alfredo Coelho set out to build the motel and pool, but made so many onsite changes that his family believes that it was only his friendship with Raúl Tojal that accounted for the architect not withdrawing from the project outright.¹⁸ The project must have been quite controversial at the time. Firstly, it was licensed on land belonging to public hydric domain, meaning its grounds belonged to the state and were protected by law. Secondly, its location and gargantuan size were certainly conspicuous, and the modern style of the complex must have raised eyebrows among the generally conservative ruling class. The 100m-swimming pool was apparently the largest enclosed pool in Europe, featuring a pair of strapping three-meter concrete springboards. It was meant to cater in part to motel clients and guests at the original hotel down by the beach – but also for outsiders paying a fee.

Coelho's restlessness did not go unnoticed among the authorities. An official report on the construction of the motel from February 1966 reads: '[Coelho] seems someone unwilling to abide by the laws that this Direction-General is committed to enforce'.¹⁹ The report, which went all the way up to the Minister level, also points out that, by August 1965, a technical survey of the worksite by the Direction-General for Urbanisation Services, had been shocked to find that an extra fourth floor was being added to the building. To work around the surveyors' objections, Coelho pulled off some spectacular stunts: according to the *Jornal de Sintra*, he decided to open the swimming pool for free in 1965, while some of its facilities and the motel rooms were still unfinished.²⁰ This must have made him quite popular with the public, and added extra pressure on those fighting him. Coelho also managed to get Portuguese public television to make a 13-minute film about the facility, showing its joyfully crowded pool in full use.²²

Then, when on 19 April 1966 the mayor of Sintra issued Coelho an order, to produce a proper set of drawings in 30 days, Coelho responded by arranging for President Tomás and his entourage to inaugurate the motel²⁴. The presidential visit was filmed and aired on Portuguese public television, followed by other media.²⁵ A huge festivity was arranged, with local authorities, fire-crackers and the fire brigade's brass band – this event must have turned the whole affair into a *fait accompli*. Coelho's family still states that the hotel went into operation without a proper license. The fact that plans including the fourth floor, which accommodated

¹⁷ Process 7146/63, Sintra Municipal Archive.

¹⁸ Interview with Miguel Guerra Coelho, Alfredo Nunes Coelho's son, Praia das Maças, 28 January 2020.

¹⁹ Report by Amadeu de Freitas, 9 February 1966, pp. 3&4, in Process 7146/63, Sintra Municipal Archive.

²⁰ Carlos José Vieira, 'A Piscina Nova', in *Jornal de Sintra*, 1642, 12 September 1965, p.7.

²² This segment aired on 26 September 1965, and can be viewed online. See 'Piscina da Praia Grande em Sintra', RTP Arquivos, 26 September 1965, <https://arquivos.rtp.pt/conteudos/piscina-da-praia-grande/>, accessed 6 September 2021.

²⁴ António Medina Júnior, 'A Extraordinária Obra Turística da Praia Grande', in *Jornal de Sintra*, 1677, 15 May 1966, pp.1&3.

²⁵ 'Inauguração de complexo turístico', RTP Arquivos, 5 May 1966, <https://arquivos.rtp.pt/conteudos/inauguracao-de-complexo-turistico/>, accessed 6 September 2021.

21 suites, could not be found either at Town Hall, the Coelho family's archives or the hotel's archives suggests that this was in fact the case.

The motel/restaurant/pool facility became known as Piscina-Praia (literally, 'Pool-Beach'). The motel, which was one of the first of its kind in Portugal, had its guests park their cars on its rooftop, which gets shown (with no cars) in the closing shots of *The Survivors*, the film-within-the-film in *The State of Things*. The building, shaped like a boomerang, bent around the pool and the terrace surrounding it, with the back of its exterior set against a rocky slope plunging into the sea.

All the motel suites located on the fourth floor had a balcony looming over the huge swimming pool and facing the sea. The suites had individual entrances at the back, accessed through a gallery screened by a set of nimble wooden grids set at an angle. These were removed when the motel was changed into a hotel almost 20 years later, and the galleries became inside corridors. The screens can be seen at 57:13 in *The State of Things*, as Joe Corby (Samuel Fuller) is leaving the hotel, and also in a beautiful outtake included in Bac Vidéo's 2013 DVD collection of Wenders' films, where a hotel maid is walking towards the camera carrying a breakfast tray. It is the scene from Wenders' career which most resembles the work of Yasujirō Ozu, whom he greatly admired, and it demonstrates how *The State of Things* provides a lively record of the original Arribas building.

Meanwhile, operating the Arribas Motel without a license had become even more difficult by 1969, with the death of Raúl Tojal. At this point, Coelho's enterprise began to face serious economic hardship, which led to its collapse in 1973, and Coelho's investments fell into the hands of an 'exploration committee' named by his creditors.²⁶ The exploration committee ran the hotel and motel until 31 October 1974 (the year of Portugal's 25 April Revolution, which overthrew the Estado Novo regime). In the post-revolutionary years, the hotel staff took management of the facilities into its own hands, in what seems to have been the first so-called, 'intervention' – an expression used in those years to describe popular takeovers of privately owned properties or businesses – in the Portuguese hospitality business. This transition was meaningful enough for Portuguese public television to film and broadcast a documentary about it on 21 October 1975.²⁷ The footage provides a valuable insight into that peculiar political period in Portuguese history. It also shows the hotel's surroundings, from which traditional agricultural plots were soon to disappear. Fenced-in cane hedges can still be seen in a 1982 aerial survey photograph by the Portuguese mapping services (the year of *The State of Things*' release). Today, they have been all but replaced by permanent or weekend housing.

The staff management of the hotel was, however, also short-lived. In the second half of the 1970s, its present owner bought the operation at a public auction, and was therefore in charge of both Arribas Hotel and Motel by the time Wim Wenders staged his film there in 1981.

²⁶ According to Miguel Guerra Coelho, upon already cited interview, these were primarily the Banco Nacional Ultramarino and the State Tourism Fund, which had guaranteed a loan to Coelho by the Caixa Nacional de Crédito savings bank.

²⁷ 'Hotel das Arribas', RTP Arquivos, 21 October 1975, <https://arquivos.rtp.pt/conteudos/hotel-das-arribas/>, accessed 23 May 2020.

One of the challenges of the Arribas enterprise is the wear-and-tear it suffers from the sea, which may wreck it as badly as seen in Wenders' film. This is repeated cyclically, meaning that maintenance and repairs are always in demand. A round of such repairs provided the setting of some of the footage for the alternate music video for U2's 2004 track *Vertigo*.

Known as *Vertigo, Lisbon Version*, the video is set to the sound of a 10" remix by Jacknife Lee and was filmed in black-and-white 8mm film by Joe Edwards. In it, the members of U2 are seen walking across the emptied hotel pool floor,²⁸ shot during the rock band's stay in Lisbon and around Sintra. The band was there to be photographed by Anton Corbijn in the spring of 2004, a shoot which yielded the album cover for *How to Dismantle an Atomic Bomb*, taken at the 'Concha' restaurant-bar by Raúl Tojal at the Praia das Maças (also featured in the album booklet's last interior photograph) [swimming-pool](#), as well as the album's back cover. Parts of Edwards' video, including scenes at the Arribas Hotel, can be found in Richie Smyth's *U2 + 3 Songs*, a documentary featured in the special limited edition album case collecting that DVD along with the *How to Dismantle an Atomic Bomb* CD. It also features in a special booklet which, incidentally, includes a collage of photographs by drummer Larry Mullen Jr showing his bandmates walking along the Praia Grande. Stills from Edwards' 8mm film also make up the bulk of the images in the standard album booklet.

The U2 video shot in and around the Arribas stands as an *nth* crossing of paths between Wenders and the band. Wenders directed a couple of music videos for U2, while they in turn recorded the title song for Wenders' *Until the End of the World* (1991), which was followed by a track for *The End of Violence* (1997), plus a set of songs for ~~year~~ *The Million Dollar Hotel* (2000). The script for the latter was co-written by U2 lead singer Bono, who was also the executive producer for the film's soundtrack.

The State of Things

Wenders has argued that *The State of Things* would be impossible to film today, for want of support for experimental filmmaking and actors willing to take part in it. Most of the crew also stayed in the dilapidated motel, in a sense performing the plot of the film – this would be impossible to do today, for environmental and legal reasons – as stated by the film director in the November 2019 interview with him:

I know I lived here, I know some of the actors lived here. It could be that some of the crew stayed somewhere else, because there was not much service here. And, I think some, like – oh, we had a cameraman, he wanted to have a little more service. I think some of the crew stayed somewhere else, and the ones that stayed here, basically had to do on our own. Made our own coffee, and basically stayed here and there was no personnel to help.

But I didn't mind, I thought it was great to stay here and... It was better to live the situation of the film than to be somewhere in a hotel and come here to shoot. So we stayed here.

Wenders engaged most of the actors and technical crew from *Le Territoire*, the film that Raúl Ruiz had just finished filming nearby. Besides Isabelle Weingarten, the cast for *The State of Things* included Geoffrey Carey, Jeffrey Kime and Rebecca Pauly, along with Paul Getty III, the

²⁸ Joe Edwards, "Vertigo, Lisbon Version," filmed Spring 2004, video, 4:19. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c0oPYK-N9GE>.

unfortunate grandson of the US oil tycoon John Paul Getty, then the world's richest man. Getty III had gone through a kidnapping ordeal in Italy some years earlier, an event that Ridley Scott turned into the 2017 feature film *All the Money in the World*.

Ruiz filmed extensively in Portugal for many years, mostly shooting feature films around Sintra and its sea coast together with the Portuguese celebrity producer Paulo Branco, who also became an associate producer of *The State of Things*. Ruiz' film premiered in Portugal in September 1981 and *The State of Things* was first shown at the Venice Film Festival a year later. It had been wrapped up during the early months of 1981, shortly before Paul Getty III fell into a coma, caused by a cocktail of drugs and alcohol, which left him quadriplegic, partially blind and unable to speak. In *The State of Things*, Getty III plays the screenwriter of *The Survivors*, a character who has put his own money into the production of the sci-fi film-within-a-film. This led to speculation around whether Getty III, the actor, might have actually financed Ruiz's film. This question was discussed during the cited interview with Wenders, at the Arribas Hotel:

I think it's a rumor. I heard that rumor too. But I was never able to really clarify it, but I think it was a rumor, because Paul wasn't rich.

I didn't hear the rumor. I thought about it.

Paul had got disinherited. I mean, it was not a pleasant family story.

Yes, I imagine...

Especially the grandfather was the original Mr Scrooge. Very, very, very – how do you call it?!... Scroogey.

Wenders added an unlikely set of actors to the *Le Territoire* crew. He must have procured these in a rush, since Ruiz's team had to stay on in Sintra. Viva Auder, an Andy Warhol muse who had appears in a number of his jarring films, such as *The Nude Restaurant* (1967), *Tub Girls* (1967) and *Blue Movie* (1969) – played Kate, the wife of the director of *The Survivors*. Auder's daughter appeared in the film too:

Viva later did films together with her daughter. Her daughter...

Alex...

She came along with her.

And there is another child...

Yes. The additional cast that came, that was not in the Raúl Ruiz movie, was Patrick Bauchau, Sam Fuller, Viva and her daughter... And little...

Camila Mora...

Camila Mora! She is now a painter – she's a good painter. And Camila was a friend of the Raúl Ruiz family. Aw... I don't know how Camila got into the picture?... maybe I met her before we started shooting, and then I figured, because Viva had come with her daughter, that it would be better if there were two kids instead of one. And they became the best of friends!

Patrick Bauchau, the Los Angeles-based Belgian actor, was cast as Friedrich Monroe, the film-within-the-film's director, a character who is, of course, Wenders' alter ego. This relationship is nicely portrayed in an on-set photograph of Wenders sitting next to actor Samuel Fuller (who played the cinematographer Joe Corby) in one of the Arribas suites. Both hold cigars, apparently shortly before a scene between Fuller and 'director' Patrick Bauchau was about to be shot, around minute 55 in *The State of Things*.

The American screenwriter, director, and sometime actor Sam Fuller had played minor roles in Wenders' *American Friend* (1977) and *Hammett*, and had a final endearing stand in *The End of Violence*, premiered the month before Fuller passed away on 30 October 1997. His engagement in *The State of Things* was highly unconventional:

You told us about Harry Dean Stanton playing [himself]. And, considering The State of Things, I was thinking whether the same could be said about Samuel Fuller?!

Oh, yeah... Well, Samuel did play a cameraman that we both knew. It was the old cameraman who I had started *Hammett* with, Joe Byroc, and Sam had made several films with Joe Byroc. So that's why we called him in the film 'Joe', it was in reference to Joe Byroc, who then, when I returned to Hollywood a year later, to finish *Hammett*, didn't finish my film because his wife had died and he had retired. So, Sam and I decided that we would call the character 'Joe' and he was... We shot it in honour of Joe Byroc.

And, when you shot the film, Samuel Fuller's wife had died, is that it?! Or Joe's?!...

Joe Byroc's, yeah...Sam Fuller's wife has survived him, and she is still around.

It's really incredible how naturally he [Fuller] acts, and I've read things about his cigar, which he seemed to carry all the time.

The cigar was... his payment, because I didn't know how to pay Sam, and we didn't have all that much money, but I asked him: "How much should I pay you, for being the actor here, for playing the part?", and Sam said: "Well, don't give me any money, but please I would like to have a box of Cuban cigars for every day of shooting". So I said: "Sure, that sounds like a good deal", and only later realised that a box of Cuban cigars was very expensive. So, he got one box every day, and he smoked a lot, he smoked five or six a day. But that was his payment, he had his payment in cigars... Knowing how expensive they were, it was a good deal for him!

So, he tricked you?

Yes!!! (laughs)

Wenders recently published a moving recollection of Fuller in his essay collection *The Pixels of Paul Cézanne*:

We would accompany him to his hotel room after a tough day of shooting, my director of photography or my assistant, and me just to make sure that Sam was fine and had all he needed. And before we knew it he would light up a cigar and remember something he had intended to tell us earlier, but then we had been too busy shooting, and now it came back to him....

Hours later we would still be sitting on his sofa with Sam gesticulating wildly so that the cigar ash would be falling on the carpet... I remember clearly one moment, late at night, during *The American Friend*, when my cameraman Robby was sound asleep on the sofa and Sam was actually jumping up and down on the bed, his shoes on, cigar in hand, illustrating some weird incident on a film shoot long ago, laughing like crazy and breathlessly continuing his tale. (He would also talk while keeping his cigar in his mouth, still speaking with utter clarity, which not many people can accomplish.)³⁰

As mentioned, Alexandra (Alex) Auder plays Monroe's daughter and features with her friend Camila in a number of scenes in *The State of Things*: in a BMW 'Isetta' with the hotel as a backdrop, for example, the same prop which re-emerged in *Lisbon Story* (although the different license plate suggests it is not the same car), a thread linking both movies, with an autobiographical touch about Wim Wenders as well:

My father had a car like this in the '60s.

Me too.

You too?!

It burned under my butt! Because – [it] only [has one] seat. Two people can sit on it. And the battery was under the seat. And I bought the car for 200 marks. Which was not very much. It was used. And in the first week I had it, my seat got very hot. And it got very hot!!! And I stopped the car and got out, and then flames came in through the seat, and the whole car burned! And it was gone. It was burned. And I loved it.

And it was a new car? Or used?

No, it was very used. It was old! I bought it for nothing! 200 marks! It was nothing! 200 marks is 100 euros today.

But it's got an especially dangerous thing about it. It's only got one door, I think. Or not?

Its only got this one door here.

The door in front. So, if you smash it...

... You can't get out of the car.

The door opens in front, right?!

With the wheel! The wheel opens and goes...

You're stuck in it! Let's say it starts burning...

Well, you can climb out of the roof...And the only way they were allowed to build it was with an open roof, because you have a second exit.

And my father says it was also very hard to drive, very dangerous when it was rainy, it would slip a lot.

³⁰ Wim Wenders, 'The Storyteller: Samuel Fuller', in *The Pixels of Paul Cézanne* (London and New York, NY: Faber & Faber, 2018 - first published in German in 2015), pp 86–87.

Yes, I can confirm that. I had mine for only a week, and then it was burned.

For one week... That was not a good investment. Worse than the cigars for Samuel Fuller?!

Much better invested, yeah.

The final part of *The State of Things*, filmed in Los Angeles, included some additional short acts, namely by the film producer and director Roger Corman and Allen Garfield, who played *The Survivors'* film producer, and who was a tragic victim of Covid-19 in April 2020. Garfield is credited under his real name, Allen Goorwitz, which he used during a year-long break in his career as homage to his parents, who had recently died.

The Arribas, post-Wenders

After *The State of Things* was filmed, the owners of the Arribas submitted a proposal to change the original hotel by the beach into an aparthotel, turning its 36 bedrooms into 26 apartments.³¹ This was approved in July 1986, but took some time to pull off. The strategy was to raise money through selling the units, and ultimately moving the hotel into the motel by the swimming pool.

Consequently, the motel became a 3-star hotel, with the addition of a fifth floor to the building, where its main entrance is presently located. At the same time, the whole operation finally got licensed.³² Further alterations, which have given the Hotel Arribas its present look, included a glazed gash at the centre of the building's west elevation and a new east-facing façade: a peculiar late-Postmodern exercise sporting rows of inverted triangular windows in its corridors.

Raúl Ruiz's *Love Torn in a Dream*, filmed in 2000 and produced by Paulo Branco, features a couple of scenes on the balcony of the restaurant in the modified Arribas Hotel, and inside one of its bedrooms, with actors Lambert Wilson, Elsa Zylberstein and Melvil Poupaud.

It is likely that *The State of Things* had, in turn, drawn Ruiz's attention to the hotel, so a number of scenes in *Love Torn in a Dream* were filmed at Praia da Adraga, the beach lying a stone's throw south of the Praia Grande. Here, the sand meets huge vertical rock strata which were upturned by a granite outcrop eons ago, and which jut out into the sea.³³ Incidentally, these cliffs are crisscrossed by tracks of dinosaur footprints, which were identified on 24 April 1981.

Did you know on the southern tip of the beach of Praia Grande, where you shoot Viva with her daughter, with the hotel in the distance...

Yeah.

There is a huge rock slab, in the cliff, with giant dinosaur footsteps?

³¹ Proposal dated July 1983, processes 2248/85, 4559/85 and 1667/86 kept at the Sintra Municipality Archive.

³² Process 7503/1991 at Sintra Municipality Archive.

³³ Benoît Peeters and Guy Scarpetta, *Raoul Ruiz. Le Magicien* (Brussels: Les Impressions Nouvelles, 2015), p 182.

Oh!... I've never heard of that...Is it scientifically classified?!

They are absolutely classified.

So, long time ago, the coast was probably much further out?...

The coast was further out at some moments, and shorter at others. Further out, during Ice Ages. But what happens is that Sintra mountain-chain is made of granite and the area involving it is limestone, and so, it outcropped, and the slab you see there used to be horizontal, and then it was tilted vertically, and the footsteps of dinosaurs are now vertically positioned.

Maybe the dinosaurs climbed the wall!

The State of Things generated a few 'butterfly effects'. It started Wenders' long relationship with Lisbon and its surroundings, where he filmed part of the globetrotting *Until the End of the World* (1991). His second feature film made in Portugal, *Lisbon Story*, was a response to a documentary commission from Lisbon's 1994 'European Capital of Culture' programme. Instead of producing a documentary, Wenders proposed a sequel of sorts to *The State of Things* starring the Wenders regular Rüdiger Vogler, whose character searches the city for the director of the fictional film from *The State of Things* (*The Survivors*), Friedrich Monroe, played again by Patrick Bauchau.

Upon finishing *The State of Things*, Wenders was left with a number of 35mm, 1:1.66, stereo film reels in the United States, where he had gone to wrap up the film (along with *Hammett*). Wenders offered this film stock to Jim Jarmusch as a kickstart to *Stranger than Paradise* (1984), although Jarmusch later described the footage as "uncommon, unsophisticated, high speed, very grainy film".³⁴ Wenders had met Jarmusch through the director Nicholas Ray, who had played a part in Wenders' 1977 film *The American Friend*. Ray lectured at the NYU film programme, where he had taken on Jarmusch as an assistant.

The offer of stock material by Wenders and his production company at the time, Chris Sievernich's New York-based Gray City Inc, developed into a coproduction between Wenders and Jarmusch in the first third of *Stranger than Paradise*. This arrangement would later sour the relationship between Jarmusch and Sievernich, whom Jarmusch had to buy the film rights back from. In doing so, Jarmusch established his unique management practice of retaining all rights for his own films.

Wenders subsequently acknowledged having helped "the odd director [in] making his or her second feature, though I told myself it's not necessarily the right thing to do, it might saddle them with being thought of as my protégés. All I really did for Jim Jarmusch was give him some

³⁴ Tod Lippy, 'Entrevista com Jim Jarmusch', in *Jim Jarmusch. Melancólica Independência* (Lisbon: Cinemateca Portuguesa – Museu do Cinema, 2007), originally published in *Projections 11 – New York Film-Makers on New York Film-Making* (London and New York, NY: Faber & Faber, 2000), p 17. *Stranger than Paradise* was to be Jarmusch's first commercial feature film.

stock, and that was a kind of albatross he carried around with him for years".³⁶ The feeling was mutual, at least at the beginning of Jarmusch's career:

He's a friend of mine. I met him through Nick Ray...and since then he's been very supportive, trying to help me find money for my projects...and then helping me with the first part of *Stranger*. Sometimes in the press they say that I'm his protégé, or that my film's imitative of him, which really makes me furious because I feel I have a very distinctive style and yet I like his stuff a lot.³⁷

The State of Things features in its sparse soundtrack two songs by The Del-Byzanteens, the rock band in which Jarmusch sang and played the keyboards. The rapport between the two directors has endured, as shown in Wenders' Neue Road Movies co-production of Jarmusch's 2013 feature, *Only Lovers Left Alive*.

No more film

It is ironic that Wenders came to face the same film stock shortage in *The State of Things* which had brought him to Portugal to help Raúl Ruiz in the first place. The film even plays with this recurring concern, as seen in an early scene where Joe Corby tells Friedrich Monroe that they've run out of film:

No more film!

How about the short ends? ...

That's what we've been using for the last two days...You have no more film to make this picture!

Wenders is likely to have tackled this predicament by shooting fewer takes, which makes the outtakes included in the Bac Vidéo edition all the more rare. That *The State of Things* ended up producing leftovers for Jarmusch is even more bewildering.

Yesterday...you said you ran out of film for The State of Things...

Yeah.

... but on the other hand, I read somewhere that some leftovers you had were handed by you to Jim Jarmusch, to do Stranger than Paradise. Is this true?

Yes. Because, in the beginning, when we started the film in black-and-white, we bought every black-and-white film that we could get anywhere: in America, in Europe, and after a while there was no more black-and-white, we had bought everything! Then, we had to wait for more supply and when we shot in Los Angeles and Hollywood, we ordered a new amount of film from Kodak, and we rather ordered too much, so we would never fall into the situation again that we couldn't continue, so I had several reel leftovers when we finished the film. The last shoot was in Los Angeles, and after that, in my office in New York, I still had three or even four of the really big reels...The reels we

³⁶ Wim Wenders, 'Travelling in Time. From the Conversation with Wolfram Schütte about his New Film. The European Cinema and Germany', in *The Act of Seeing. Essays and Conversations*, op cit, p 13.

³⁷ Cassandra Stark, 'The Jim Jarmusch Interview' (1985), in Ludvig Hertzberg (ed), *Jim Jarmusch Interviews* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), p 52..

had were three-hundred feet, and that was... You could shoot for ten minutes, almost 11 minutes. So, I guess...

When I heard from Isabelle that Raul was out of film, and they couldn't continue shooting, I thought that was exactly what they needed. And later, after our film had enough left...

... to hand down to Jim Jarmusch...

... to hand down to Jim, who looked into my refrigerator in the office, with big eyes when he saw all the reels...

He was there, passing by, and saw the reels?!

Yeah, he saw the reels, and he wanted to get a coke. And then he saw a fridge full of film.

That's a beautiful story! Instead of a coke he got a film!

It was also through Wenders that Jarmusch came to work with the cinematographer Robby Müller, who had directed the photography for all of Wenders' films in Germany, as well as some in the United States. Jarmusch's account of the story is worth reciting:

I loved Robby Müller's work and I asked Wim Wenders in 1980 how I might meet him. I was going to Rotterdam Film Festival to show my first film, *Permanent Vacation*. At that time in Rotterdam the people who visited the festival stayed on a boat that was harboured there. It had a bar in it, and Wim said, "Just go on the boat and in the bar next to the peanut machine, Robby Müller will be sitting there".

So I went to Rotterdam, I went on the boat, I went in the bar, and next to the peanut machine, Robby Müller was sitting there.³⁸

Müller would be the photography director of Jarmusch's *Down By Law* (1986), *Mystery Train* (1989), *Coffee and Cigarettes* (2003) and *Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai* (1999).

Wenders would have a prolific year in 1982: he shot the *Chambre 666* interviews at the Cannes Film Festival and premiered *The State of Things* at the Venice Film Festival, winning the Golden Lion for it.

Jarmusch's *Stranger than Paradise* won the 1984 Caméra d'Or for best first feature film at Cannes, with Wenders' *Paris, Texas* receiving the Palme d'Or at the same event.

The ill-fated developer of the Arribas Hotel and Motel, Alfredo Nunes Coelho, died on 22 August 1991, with most people using the Praia Grande and its thoroughfare remaining ignorant of his achievements.

Research in Portuguese architecture has remained largely ignorant of the considerable career of Raúl Tojal, who designed the building which sparked Wim Wenders purpose of filming *The State of Things* 40 years ago at the Arribas Motel – the facility, meanwhile converted into a hotel, which is close to celebrating its 60th anniversary. This research and article also means to fill in that gap.

³⁸ Geoff Andrew, 'Jim Jarmusch Interview' (held at the 43rd London Film Festival, 15 November 1999, and published on the festival website), in: Ludvig Hertzberg (Ed.), *op. cit.*, p.192.