



PAULO BRANCO PRESENTS

OS PAPÉIS DO INGLÊS

THE
ENGLISHMAN'S
PAPERS



A FILM BY SÉRGIO GRACIANO

BASED ON THE TRILOGY "OS FILHOS DE PRÓSPERO" BY RUY DUARTE DE CARVALHO

SCREENPLAY BY JOSÉ EDUARDO AGUALUSA

SYNOPSIS

Ruy Duarte de Carvalho, poet, novelist and filmmaker, finds out that his father left papers in the Namib desert that would help him shed light on a mystery that occurred in 1923. Through his search for the “Englishman’s papers”, we embark on an epic tale that goes from the turn of the 19th century to the end of the 20th, in the magnificent locations of the Angolan south.

2024 | PORTUGAL | 2H 16MIN | DRAMA | FEATURE FILM
RELEASE DATE: 24-10-2024

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CAST



JOÃO PEDRO VAZ
Ruy Duarte



DAVID CARACOL
Jonas Trindade



MIGUEL BORGES
Kaluter



CARLOS AGUALUSA
Severo



DÉLCIO RODRIGUES
Kapa



JOANA RIBEIRO
Camila



CAROLINA AMARAL
Paula

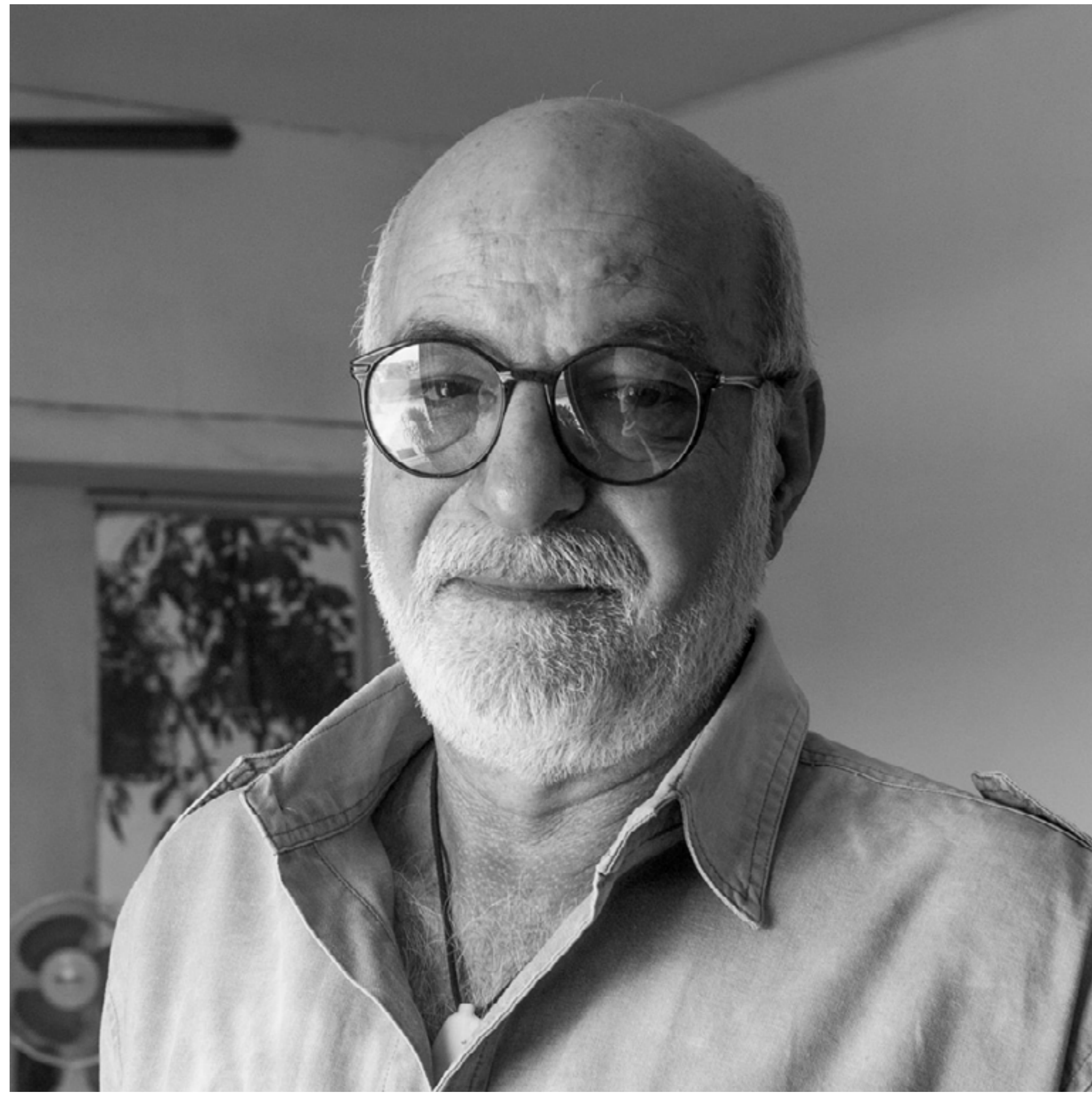


SANDRA GOMES
Ulya



XAVIER ANTÓNIO
Jonas Trindade (Young)

RUY DUARTE DE CARVALHO



Ruy Duarte de Carvalho, born in 1941 in Santarém, is Angolan by choice of citizenship, but above all by feeling. An agricultural manager, sheep farmer, poet, anthropologist, artist, writer and filmmaker, he described his work as ‘half-fiction-erudite-poetic traveller’.

At the end of the 1970s, after studying cinema in London, he returned to Angola and made a series of fourteen documentaries about the people of south-west Angola. The films – selected for the Cahiers du Cinéma Week (1980) in Paris, and for the Young Cinema Forum at the Berlin Film Festival (1981), demonstrate the author’s attempt to portray people displaced from the centre of Angolan power – Luanda – and also a reflection on the language of ethnographic cinema developed by the French school of which French director and ethnologist Jean Rouch was the most prominent name.

He combines writing, cinema and teaching at the University of Luanda, while taking part in the struggle for the liberation of Angola.

He obtained his doctorate at the École des Hautes Études de Sciences Sociales in Paris, where he presented his film/thesis, *Nelisita: narrativas nyaneka* (1982), the first feature-length fiction film entirely spoken in an African language, Lumuíla. It was shown at the Berlin International Film Festival (1984).

Moia: o recado das ilhas (1989), made in Cape Verde and selected for the Venice Film Festival, completes his filmography with a reflection on Creole identities in the African, Atlantic and Lusophone spaces.

Considered by his peers to be one of the greatest names in Portuguese-language literature, he is especially known for ‘*Vou lá visitar pastores*’ (1999), a book that is difficult to classify because it is an anthropological essay written in language full of poetry.

His fiction includes ‘*As if the World Had No East*’ (1977), and the ‘*Sons of the Prosperous*’ trilogy: ‘*The English Papers*’ (2000), ‘*The Favourable Landscapes*’ (2005) and ‘*The Third Half*’ (2009). After retiring in 2008, he moved to Namibia’s second largest city, Swakopmund, where he died in 2010.



SÉRGIO GRACIANO

DIRECTOR



Sérgio Graciano was born in Lisbon in 1975 and is an award-winning director with a prolific career and extensive experience in cinema and television. To date he has directed dozens of television series, documentaries, short and feature-length fiction films with commercial release.

Director of some of the best-known fiction series for Portuguese and Angolan television channels, such as *Auga Seca*, *Conta-me Como Foi*, *Laços de Sangue*, *Maternidade*, *Vila Faia* and *Liberdade 21*, he has been nominated for three Emmys and won an award for the soap opera *Laços de Sangue*. He has been nominated four times for the SPA Autores awards for Best Series of the Year, winning twice. He divides his time between producing series and soap operas for television and more alternative productions for cinema. To this end, he set up his own

production company, Caos Calmo Filmes, often working in partnership with Manuel Pureza, director and producer of *Coyote Vadio*.

He made his feature film debut with *Assim Assim* (2012), directing and producing, which he shot with just five thousand euros, bringing together a luxury cast that included names like Rita Blanco, Miguel Guilherme, Margarida Carpinteiro, Albano Jerónimo and Nuno Lopes, because they all loved the project. He spent two years in Angola where he was responsible for fiction at Semba Comunicação, and where he directed *Njinga – The Queen of Angola* (2013), the most watched Angolan film ever, which won two awards at the African Film Academy.

Uma Vida à Espera (2016) won the Audience Award at the 8th edition of FESTin – Itinerant Portuguese Language Film Festival, followed by *A Impossibilidade de Estar Só* (2020) and *O Som que Desce da Terra* (2021) – one of the finalists for the selection of the Portuguese representative for the Oscars. In April 2022, *Salgueiro Maia – O Implicado* premiered, and *Soares é Fixe* followed in 2024.

The Englishman’s Papers, a desert epic in which Sérgio Graciano makes an original portrait of Portuguese colonialism in Angola, based on a script by José Eduardo Agualusa, inspired by the trilogy “Os filhos de Próspero” by Ruy Duarte de Carvalho, is his most recent project.

NOTES BY THE FILMMAKERS



SÉRGIO GRACIANO

DIRECTOR

The Englishman's Papers, the film I directed inspired by the life of Ruy Duarte de Carvalho, is a tribute to the magnitude of his work and the richness of his life. Throughout this feature-length film, I sought to explore not only the multifaceted man, but also the poet, the filmmaker, the anthropologist and the painter, highlighting the various dimensions that make up his legacy. Ruy Duarte de Carvalho was not just an observer of the world that surrounded him, but a creator of universes, both through his words and the images he brought to life, whether in cinema, literature or on the canvas.

The starting point of this work is his poetry, which emerges as the backbone of his entire artistic production. His poetry is not just written, but lived, felt in the rhythms of the landscape, in the silences of the Angolan people he portrayed so well. The film therefore enhances the musicality of his words, creating moments of pause and contemplation where the spectator can immerse himself in his verses. Works such as *Chão de Oferta* and *Lavra* offer an emotional map of the author, a poetic cartography that crosses borders between colonial and post-colonial Angola, but also between his Angola and the rest of the world. The use of poetic narration is central to the film, giving

voice to Ruy Duarte himself, not only as a way of contextualising his life, but also of amplifying his unique way of seeing and feeling the world.

This film is then structured around two main pillars: poetry and cinema, which intertwine to create a portrait of a man in constant search. By emphasising these two dimensions, I wanted to go beyond the usual biographical portrait, trying to capture Ruy Duarte de Carvalho's restless spirit. Throughout the film, the transition between poetry and cinema is fluid, mirroring the very transience of the author's life, who moved between Portugal, Angola, Mozambique and so many other places in the world, carrying with him his vision of a profound and universal Angola.

Visually, the film seeks to evoke this constant migration of senses, alternating between archive scenes, images of nature and Angolan landscapes. The aim is to create a sensory experience, where the audience not only sees and hears, but feels what Ruy Duarte de Carvalho felt. Throughout the film, colour and texture help to underline the intimate and emotional nature of his work. The colour palette I use in the sequences echoes the warm, earthy tones of the Angolan land.

This film is therefore an attempt to translate to the screen the plurality of an artist who never limited himself to a single form of expression. By emphasising poetry, I wanted to give the viewer the opportunity to immerse himself in the complexity and sensitivity of Ruy Duarte de Carvalho, revealing him not just as a storyteller, but as someone who lived art to the full. It's a tribute to his creative genius, who, through words, images and colour, built an immortal legacy that continues to inspire new generations.

Through this film, I hope the public can rediscover Ruy Duarte de Carvalho, not just as a figure from the past, but as a necessary voice for understanding the present, someone whose poetic and artistic vision of the world remains as relevant and urgent as ever.





PAULO BRANCO PRODUCER

My relationship with Ruy Duarte de Carvalho began in 1971, in London, where I had gone to escape the dictatorship in Portugal. Ruy was there at the time studying film and also working as a farm manager. We nurtured a strong friendship until his unexpected death in 2010, and I always followed his work in film and writing very closely and with immense admiration throughout those forty years. That's how, in 1980, I showed the series *Presente angolano: tempo mumuila* in Paris during the Cahiers du Cinéma Week at the Action République cinema, which I was directing at the time.

That great friendship between us also led to us working together. I produced his feature film *Móia: The Islands' Message*, under very difficult conditions, and the film was selected for the Venice Film Festival in 1989, in the section that was the equivalent of the current Orizzonti. When I read his fiction books, I was always fascinated by the possibility of making a film adaptation that would reflect not only the stories he tells, but also the character himself – who was Ruy Duarte de Carvalho. And so the idea for the film *The Englishman's Papers* was born.

The last time we spoke, shortly before his death, I told him about my desire to carry out this adaptation and he replied: “Paulo, I give you all the freedom to do it, but with someone you choose. I'm no longer a film-maker, and I don't want to be one again. For me, at the moment, writing is where I live.” Writing and the Namib desert, where he often invited me to visit him. It was therefore an extremely important challenge for me to carry out the production of *The Englishman's Papers*, which adapts the trilogy ‘Os Filhos de Próspero’. And I can't help but feel very proud of the work of José Eduardo Agualusa on the adaptation and screenplay, and Sérgio Graciano on the direction. And with the extraordinary cast and crew who worked on it, in the south of Angola, where Ruy Duarte's geographical and literary landscapes meet.

I think this is the greatest tribute we can pay to this enormous figure in our literature, Ruy Duarte de Carvalho.



JOSÉ EDUARDO AGUALUSA
SCREENWRITER

THE ENGLISHMAN'S PAPERS **HISTORY OF A SCREENPLAY**

When Paulo Branco invited me to write a screenplay based on Ruy Duarte's "Os Filhos de Próspero" trilogy, I accepted with enthusiasm. I like challenges, and I soon realised that it wouldn't be easy to create a coherent plot from three books that are so unique, so dense and complex, so difficult to classify. The first, "The Englishman's Papers", is an almost conventional novel, with the author telling how he reconstructed an authentic drama: the suicide of an English adventurer in southern Angola at the beginning of the 20th century.

The other two books, "A Terceira Metade" and "Paisagens Propícias", which are very little read, are a mixture of bold poetic exercises, ideas for future novels and sociological and anthropological theses. In the midst of those often chaotic, absurdly brilliant pages, I took two extraordinary characters, Trindade and Severo, and reinvented them, inserting them into the main story line. It was a delicate and fascinating piece of watchmaking that gave me great pleasure.

Writing this script also allowed me to explore and deepen the novelistic character of Ruy Duarte himself, and some of his obsessions.

Ruy Duarte de Carvalho was born in Santarém in 1941 and died in 2010, aged 69, in a small German town wedged between the Atlantic Ocean and the vast Namibian desert – Swakopmund. He was a poet, novelist, film-maker and anthropologist, as well as a farm manager and brewmaster. He was also an almost secret visual artist – one of his poetry books has illustrations by him: "Sinais Misteriosos Já Se Vista"; another, "Lavra Paralela", includes a beautiful self-portrait. I've kept two watercolours he gave me depicting *mucubi* bulls.

Ruy lived in very different geographies: Moçâmedes, Luanda, London (which was where he said he felt best), Paris or Maputo. However, he never abandoned the landscapes of his childhood, in the far south of Angola. I'm talking about the city of Moçâmedes and the Namib desert. These landscapes, and the people they contain, with particular emphasis on the *cuvale* shepherds, better known as *mucubais*, are the centre of all his work, not only his poetry, but also his fiction, essays and even films.



Like other Angolan writers of Portuguese descent – such as Luandino Vieira, David Mestre or Henrique Abranches, to name but a few authors born in Portugal who applied for and obtained Angolan nationality after independence – Ruy Duarte has used literature as a way of affirming his identity. As a claim to belonging.

These are central issues in the trilogy – and also, of course, in the script. Ruy Duarte places himself, as a character, at the centre of his entire production. He is a character crossed by all kinds of concerns, by great anger, by deep personal grudges. I tried to make this complexity present in the figure of Ruy, the character, and his other two curious alter egos: Trindade and Severo.

Ruy Duarte de Carvalho is not only the most interesting figure in Angolan literature, he is one of the richest and most fascinating figures in Lusophone literature. The greatness of his work transcends borders. I hope that this film contributes to his discovery, or rediscovery, and that his books find the readers they deserve.

CREW

Based on the trilogy “Os Filhos de Próspero”
by **Ruy Duarte de Carvalho**

Screenplay: **José Eduardo Agualusa**

Director: **Sérgio Graciano**

Producer: **Paulo Branco**

DOP: **Mário Castanheira**

Art director: **Artur Pinheiro**

Costumes: **Isabel Branco**

Editors: **Roberto Perpignani, Tiago Augusto**

Sound: **Gita Cerveira, Pedro Góis**

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