

## Document Citation

Title	<b>Inquietude</b>
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Source	<i>Reader (Chicago, Ill.)</i>
Date	
Type	review
Language	English
Pagination	
No. of Pages	1
Subjects	
Film Subjects	Inquiétude (Anxiety), Oliveira, Manoel de, 1998

For *Inquietude* he daringly combines a one-act play (Prista Monteiro's *The Immortals*) and two stories (Antonio Patricio's "Suzy" and Agustina Bessa-Luis's "The Mother of the River") into a single narrative: the characters in "Suzy" attend a performance of the play, and one of them recounts to another "The Mother of the River." The theme of existential identity links the three works, and de Oliveira's stately, reflective style fuses them into a seamless and luminous visual poem. Comparable in its achievement only to de Oliveira's *Doomed Love* (1978), this can't be written off simply as a "testament" that sums up an illustrious career; de Oliveira is currently working on an adaptation of *La princesse de Cleves*, and he may well have other major films up his sleeve. Indeed, though *The Immortals* ponders the issues of old age, de Oliveira refuses the conventional pose of the old master looking back on his life and career with equanimity; *Inquietude*, a masterpiece with irreverent wit, ironic bite, and anger over the vagaries of self-definition, has the decanted authority of Carl Dreyer's *Gertrud* and the imaginative splendor of *The Arabian Nights*.

**I. *Inquietude*.** I prefer the French and Portuguese title of this three-part feature—which my dictionary defines as “disturbed state”—to its English title, *Anxiety*. But whatever you call it, Manoel de Oliveira's masterpiece offers so many lingering beauties and profundities that even after three viewings I feel I've barely scratched the surface. (Also, because the New York film festival passed on it, it's one of the few major foreign films of 1998 that received a U.S. screening only in Chicago.) It features no stars (excepting Irene Papas in the third episode), and few mainstream critics are liable to support it, so its odds of getting an American distributor are just about nil. But one way or another, I'm sure, it will find its way back to Chicago.

De Oliveira, who celebrated his 90th birthday last month, is the only director working today who started out in the silent era, and while his modernist and aristocratic sensibility is steeped in the 19th century, there's nothing old-fashioned about his work.