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Voyage to the Beginning of the World

Viagem ao principio do mundo

PORTUGAL 1997, 95 min.

DIR Manoel de Oliveira

PROD Paulo Branco **SCR** Manoel de Oliveira **CAM** Renato Berta **ED** Valérie Loiseleux **CAST** Marcello Mastroianni, Jean-Yves Gautier, Leonor Silveira, Diogo Dória, Isabel de Castro

Manoel de Oliveira has secured his master status in cinematic history by exploring some of the more unconventional stylistic methods of telling a story on film. Yet now as he nears the end of his career and his life (he is 90 this year), the Portuguese filmmaker has chosen to make what is perhaps his most direct and accessible film to date. The bittersweet pleasure of seeing a frail yet still seductive Marcello Mastroianni in his final role makes Oliveira's filmic paean to the finiteness of life all the more affecting. Mastroianni stars as Oliveira's alter ego, an aging Portuguese director named Manoel, who accompanies three of his actors on a road trip through his homeland. Manoel shares poignant memories of his youth as they stop at decaying monuments that help him recollect a past now gone forever. But the journey is really for Alfonso (Jean-Yves Gautier), a French actor whose father had left Portugal as a young man. Alfonso is on a quest to find his roots, and when the foursome finally ends up at the house of an elderly aunt he has never before seen (an eerily realistic performance by Isabel de Castro), Oliveira deftly moves beyond the personal to the collective memories of a whole culture whose way of life is also nearing its end.

Beverly Berning

Selected Filmography: Manoel de Oliveira (b. Porto, Portugal, 1908) *Valley of Abraham* (1993, SFIFF 1994), *No, or the Vain Glory of Command* (1990, SFIFF 1991), *The Cannibals* (1988, SFIFF 1989), *The Satin Slipper* (1985, SFIFF 1994), *Doomed Love* (1976, SFIFF 1994)

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