

MYSTERIES OF LISBON

(Mistérios de Lisboa)

a film by

Raúl Ruiz



Toronto/New York/San Sebastian/London Film Festivals 2010

Portugal/ France / 2010 / 266 mins / Portuguese and French with English subtitles /
Certificate PG

Release date: 9 December 2011

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SYNOPSIS

Mysteries of Lisbon plunges us into a veritable whirlwind of adventures and escapades, coincidences and revelations, sentiments and violent passions, vengeance, love affairs, all wrapped in a rhapsodic voyage that takes us from Portugal to France, Italy, and as far as Brazil. In this Lisbon of intrigue and hidden identities, we encounter a series of characters all somewhat linked to the destiny of Pedro da Silva, orphan in a boarding school. Father Dinis, a descendent of the aristocratic libertines, later becomes a hero who defends justice, a countess maddened by her jealousy and set on her vengeance, a prosperous businessman who had mysteriously made his fortune as a bloodthirsty pirate; these and many more all cross in a story set in the 19th century and all searching for the true identity of our main character.

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CREW

Director
Producer
Screenplay
Based on the novel by
Cinematographer
Music
Art Direction
Editing
Production Manager
Assistant directors
Sound
Production Coordinators
Casting Director

Production
With the participation of

With the support of

Raul Ruiz
Paulo Branco
Carlos Saboga
Camilo Castelo Branco
André Szankowski (a.i.p)
Jorge Arriagada and **Luís Freitas Branco**
Isabel Branco
Valéria Sarmiento and **Carlos Madaleno**
Ana Pinhão Moura
João Pinhão and **José Maria Vaz da Silva**
Ricardo Leal, Miguel Martins, António Lopes
Julita Santos and **Anne Mattatia (France)**
Patrícia Vasconcelos

Clap Filmes
Alfama Films, ICA –MC, ARTE France, Câmara
Municipal de Lisboa, Cofinova Développement

Câmara Municipal de Oeiras, Câmara Municipal
de Sintra Câmara, Municipal de Vila do Bispo,
EGEAC, Grupo Nova Imagem, Turismo do
Algarve, Santa Casa da Misericórdia,
Genesis Panavision

CAST

Adriano Luz
Maria João Bastos
Ricardo Pereira
Clotilde Hesme
Afonso Pimentel
João Luís Arrais
Albano Jerónimo
João Baptista
Martin Loizillon
Julien Alluguet
Rui Morisson
Joana de Verona
Carloto Cotta
Maria João Pinho
José Manuel Mendes

Father Dinis
Ângela de Lima
Alberto de Magalhães
Elisa de Montfort
Pedro da Silva
Pedro da Silva – Child
Count of Santa Bárbara
D. Pedro da Silva
Sebastião de Melo
Benoît de Montfort
Marquis of Montezelos
Eugénia
D. Álvaro de Albuquerque
Countess of Viso
Friar Baltasar da Encarnação

Special Appearances:

Léa Seydoux
Melvil Poupaud
Malik Zidi
Margarida Vilanova
Sofia Aparício
Catarina Wallenstein

Blanche de Montfort
Colonel Ernest Lacroze
Viscount of Armagnac
Marquise of Alfarela
Countess of Penacova
Countess of Arosa

And with

Américo Silva
Ana Chagas
André Gomes
António Simão
Bernard Lanneau
Dinarte Branco
Duarte Guimarães
Filipe Vargas
Helena Coelho
João Vilas Boas
José Airosa
Lena Friedrich
Marcello Urgeghe
Marco D`Almeida
Martinho da Silva
Miguel Monteiro
Nuno Távora
Paulo Pinto
Pedro Carmo
Vânia Rodrigues

Bailiff
Deolinda
Barão de Sá
Novelist
Father Dinis (French voice)
Dilettante
Registrar
D. Paulo
Marquise of Santa Eulália
Butler
Bernardo
Maid
Doctor
Count of Viso
F.
Doctor
Dilettante
D. Martinho de Almeida
Gentleman
D. Antónia

Portugal/France 2010 266 minutes Portuguese and French with English subtitles



RAÚL RUIZ



The recent death of Raúl Ruiz has deprived cinema of one of its most original and unpredictable directors.

In 1983, Serge Toubiana wrote in “*Le cas Ruiz*” (*The Case of Ruiz*), his introductory text in the magazine *Cahiers du Cinéma* Nº 345, the Raúl Ruiz special edition: “the most prolific filmmaker of our time, a man whose film credits are almost impossible to define given his diversity, splendour, and multiplicity with regard to production, for more than twenty years”.

Emerging onto the international scene at the end of the 1970's, Raúl Ruiz turned out to be one of the most exciting and innovative filmmakers in recent years, by presenting more intellectual entertainment through artistic experimentation than any other filmmaker since Jean-Luc Godard.

This prolific figure has made over 100 films in the past 30 years, yet he has never adhered to any established filming style. He has worked in 35 mm, 16 mm and even video: making cinematic feature films, television programmes for European distribution, as well as documentary films and works of fiction.

Ruiz's career began in the avant garde theatrical movement, and between 1956 and 1962, he wrote more than 100 plays. In 1968, he completed his first film, *Tres Tristes Tigres* (*Three Sad Tigers*), which immediately won him the Golden Leopard Award at the Locarno Film Festival.

Because of his support for the government of Salvador Allende, Ruiz was forced to abandon his country during the fascist coup of 1973, and lived in exile in France.

Working with innovative directors of photography such as Diego Bonancia, Sacha Vierny, Henri Alekan and Ricardo Aranovitch, he brought back a bit of the magic of French cinema poetry, by exploring the worlds of manipulation, of impotence and of violence. He explores lighting, using different filters and mirrors, and thus he recreates a filmic reality, in a kind of kaleidoscope, which introduces his audience into the labyrinth of his representations.

One of the most significant moments of his career came in 1999, when he decided to adapt

Marcel Proust's *Time Regained* for the big screen, which Joseph Losey and Visconti had both attempted to adapt for the cinema, and had failed.

And yet Ruiz has always manifested an intimacy with some of the greatest writers and thinkers, having adapted their work for the big screen throughout his career. In addition to Proust, he also adapted Jean Giono in "*Les Ames Fortes*" (*Savage Souls*); Calderon in *Life is a Dream*; Robert Louis Stevenson in *Treasure Island*; Racine in *Bérénice*; Pierre Klossowski in *La Vocation Suspendue* (*The Suspended Vocation*) and *L'Hypothèse du Tableau Volé* (*The Hypothesis of the Stolen Painting*).

Throughout his impressive career, Ruiz has created a profound partnership with producer Paulo Branco, which began in the early 1980's. They worked together for the first time in Portugal, and then in France. Raul Ruiz has since filmed 8 feature films in Portugal, out of a total of 14 films that were produced or co-produced by Paulo Branco.

It is extremely difficult to establish a complete filmography of Raul Ruiz, given the various formats he has experimented with, but this French website is trying: [le cinema de raoul ruiz](#).

In April, 2011, he planned to once again collaborate with Paulo Branco on a new feature film.

Selected filmography

2010	Mistérios de Lisboa
2008	La Maison Nucingen
2006	Klimt
2003	Ce Jour-Là
2001	Les Âmes Fortes
2000	Combat d'Amour en Songe
2000	Comédie de L'innocence
1999	Le Temps Retrouvé
1997	Généalogies d'un Crime
1996	Trois Vies et une Seule Mort
1995	Fado Majeur et Mineur
1992	L'Œil Qui Ment
1985	L'Éveillé du Pont de l'Alma
1985	Les Destins de Manoel
1985	L'Île au Trésor
1984	Point de Fuite
1983	La Ville des Pirates
1983	Les Trois Couronnes du Matelot
1982	Le Territoire
1978	L'Hypothèse du Tableau Volé
1978	La Vocation Suspendue

Camilo Castelo Branco

1825 - 1890

His novels range from Romantic melodramas to works of realism.

Born illegitimately into a family believed to have had a hereditary tendency to insanity, Camilo was orphaned in childhood and brought up by relatives in the austere and primitive Trás-os-Montes region of northern Portugal. Allowed to grow up undisciplined and proud, he studied medicine irregularly at Porto, but eventually abandoned these professions for a literary career. While a bohemian journalist in Porto he became notorious for amorous and literary intrigues. When in 1850 one of his mistresses, Ana Plácido, married a rich merchant, he sought refuge in studying for the priesthood, but left the seminary in 1852.

For a time Castelo Branco wrote Hugoesque books such as *Misterios de Lisboa* (1854; "Mysteries of Lisbon") and *Livro Negro do Padre Diniz* (1855; "Black Book of Father Diniz"), until he arrived at his later style with *Onde Está a Felicidade?* (1856; "Where Is Happiness?") and *Vingança* (1858; "Revenge"). Living as intensely as he wrote, he engaged in a series of love affairs, culminating in his elopement with Ana Plácido, the wife of a Porto businessman. The two lovers were imprisoned for adultery (1861), during which time Camilo wrote in two weeks his best-known work, *Amor de Perdição* (1862; "Fatal Love"), the story of a love thwarted by family opposition that eventually led the hero to crime and exile. It is the typical expression of the view of life with which Castelo Branco came to be identified—a view in which passion is the irresistible force and social prejudice the immovable object, their collision often resulting in tragedy, sin, and redemption through suffering.

In 1864, after his release from prison and the death of Ana Plácido's husband, Castelo Branco settled with Ana in the village of Seide in the Minho region, where he supported himself by writing unceasingly, producing verse of indifferent quality, plays, works of learning, and polemical writings. He continued to pour out novels of unequal merit, many written to order for publishers. In 1885 he was awarded the title of viscount of Correia Botelho for his writing. Despondent over his son's insanity and his own ill health and impending blindness, he committed suicide.

Outliving the Romantic era, Castelo Branco remained a Romantic by temperament and conviction. Though the objective pictures of Minho rural life in his *Novellas do Minho* (1875–77) approach Naturalism, he engaged in a literary quarrel with the emergent Naturalist school and parodied their style and subjects in *Eusébio Macário* (1879) and *A Corja* (1880; "The Rabble"). Nevertheless, while continuing to express vehement opposition to Naturalism, he more and more closely assimilated its descriptive objectivity and verisimilitude.

Mysteries of Lisbon has not yet been translated into either English or French.

(Adapted from the online Brittanica and the Penguin Companion to European Literature)

Transcript of Radio France interview with French critic Michel Ciment

Q: Hello. Today we will talk to Raúl Ruiz about his film "Mysteries of Lisbon". Raúl, you've come to this microphone often. We obviously admire your work, especially "Mysteries of Lisbon", which despite its running time of 4 hours and 30 minutes, does not feel long at all. The film has been doing well at the box office, which pleases me personally. The reviews have also been unanimous. The film won Best Director at San Sebastian Film Festival, the Critics' Award at the Sao Paulo Film Festival and it was also selected for the New York Festival. So this is an important film for you and, originally, it was intended as a soap opera for TV. It will be broadcast on ARTE I believe, in six episodes, in April 2011.

A: Yes. In April, in six episodes. It was cut down to 4 h and 30 mins (from 6 hours).

Q: It was tempting for you to make a soap opera, because you had never done anything similar, but you always took an interest in soap operas.

A: I wore two hats so to speak. I wrote screenplays for Mexican television, for Chilean television, and I also made avant-garde theatre. It was considered avant-garde at the time. For example, the theatre of the absurd or Brecht was seen as avant-garde. And those plays were my "other hat", the ones that granted me prestige. I followed that line of work, but every now and then I thought of soap operas with nostalgia. I reflected on its narrative structure, on the three-act structure, the famous structure with a central conflict. This became my central conflict and I've fought it my whole life. So that was definitely an interest of mine and I suggested some projects. In 1987, in Chile, I offered a TV station to make a "novella", because there was no reason for them to be of poor quality. You just needed to improve the dialogues and to work on narrative structures instead of its serialized structures. It means we give more relevance to chance than we would usually give on a three-act structure, in which we try to control or even eliminate chance. Since I was always interested in the logic behind this sort of thing, I found out that soap operas followed the non-standard model defined by Abraham Robinson. It's the infinite model. I don't understand much, but some of my friends are scientists and one of my best friends is a mathematician. So we entertain ourselves talking and translating ... certain concepts and behaviors... from mathematics ... into cinematographic or theatrical fiction.

There is an aspect that Robinson called overflow. It has to do with the infinite. Then we return to everyday mathematical concepts, and there is a phenomenon called overflow. This is perfect for a fiction in which we have a constant overflow. There are other aspects, but in a fiction, if we take the structure of images seriously, there is always an overflow of images. Something always bothered me in how the problem is posed by, I don't recall the name, David Bordwell. Yes, the American writer David Bordwell. I was totally unaware that I had and this may sound harsh that I had "destroyed" Bordwell's paradigm, which I didn't even know existed. But what I am actually denying is the existence both of the American model and the experimental model. He denies the other models. Other models are...I also deny that a Chilean "empanada" is a poorly made "vol au vent". It is something entirely different.

Q: Your work is extremely prolific. It includes over 100 films. I would consider this film to be part of a trilogy, a recreation of a certain world. And this world is the 19th century. The end of the 19th century and, more precisely, the beginning of the 20th. "Time Regained" was not an adaptation of a serialized novel, it's an adaptation of a great work of literature by Proust. "Klimt" is an original biopic of the Viennese painter. And "Mysteries of Lisbon" recreates Lisbon in the 19th century. In a sense, these three films reconstruct a certain world and make us relive the past, rivaling movies like "The Leopard" or "Barry Lyndon", in certain shots. Anyhow, it is a way of recreating a certain period. Do you agree with this or do you have a different perspective on your film?

A: How can I put this? As you know, aging has turned me into a creator of myths. In order to pass the time when I can't sleep at night. Mind you, I sleep a lot, around 12 hours a day but...

Q: - Not always at night.

A: - Exactly. So I started creating myths. The most recent myth, I made it up last week, is as follows: we are all dead, we resuscitate every day, we board the first available flight and travel to the past. To me, it is always the 19th century. During the flight, we always experience turbulence.

Q: And the turbulence is the present.

A: That's it. Our present is an airplane flight. But contrary to Christian beliefs, it's not a flight towards a bright future, but rather towards a strange past. And once we die, we may rest in turbulence for all of eternity. This is a problem that fascinates me, according to this perspective. I have other myths, but I won't bother you with my nightly mythology. But they always relate to this travel to the 19th century. I don't know why but the 19th century in Chile also interests me. Every time I go to Chile I feel like adapting Alberto Blest Gana. He is our Chilean Castelo Branco. And in France, I've wanted to adapt Balzac for a long time. There is an aspect that particularly interests me in Chile, but also in other countries. It's the development of nationality in every country. According to my sources in France, such as Alain Joxe, nationality was invented by Victor Hugo, Alexandre Dumas and Michelet. The same happened in every country, only the authors' names change. Blest Gana was responsible for this in Chile, to a certain extent. What interests me the most in this development is the creation of elites and aristocracies, and all the haphazard around it. In certain countries or nations, for example in the 13th or 14th century in Venice, within only a week the "cerrata" was established. It's a sort of closure. From that moment on, people were assigned names and there was a sort of a line leading to the top. In Chile, we would call it "de bezanilla para arriba". From "bezanilla" to the top, everyone is an aristocrat, but not from there to the bottom. So it is about this development, the speed at which it all happened. Both those who approve it as well as those who hate it, believe that this is fascinating, not just merely metaphysical. It has also to do with politics.

Q: Your interest in the 19th century could also be traced to Proust. In a way, Proust is the last great novelist of the 19th century and, at the same time, the first great novelist of the 20th century. Like Klimt, who looks to the Pre-Raphaelites in certain aspects. He looks to the past, but he also heralds modern painting. I believe these three films are related to each other. But what is Castelo Branco's story? It's an author we hardly know. One of his works was translated into French, "Doomed Love", which was adapted by Manoel de Oliveira. Manoel de Oliveira also wrote and shot the film "The Day of Despair", about the last days of Castelo Branco, based on his letters, and he was also one of the characters in "Francisca".

A: Yes. He is an important novelist in Portugal, who had a feud with Eça de Queirós. They are the two great novelists... I suppose we could compare him to Eugene Sue and Balzac, or to Alexandre Dumas perhaps? In a way, he was a multifaceted author. Portuguese prose is not easy or evident. Maybe that is why few of his books have been translated. It's not easy to convey the lowbrow and highbrow features simultaneously. In Portugal, people say you have to make a choice. You are either "queiros-esque" or "camillesque".

Q: Like Flaubert and Balzac.

A: Exactly. Queiros maintains a certain distance and is critical towards institutions, towards conservatism and Catholicism, whereas Castelo Branco plunges into it. He embraces it all enthusiastically and he was a

Catholic. I respect this aspect in the film, in the same way I have a lot of respect for Brecht's Marxism and the Catholicism in Spanish theatre. It's useless to change the ideology. It's not too significant in the end. We would risk destroying the work itself. So I respected this posture, his almost righteous features. Like all true Catholics, he is flawed. I don't think he ever accepted Catholic truths at face value. Ceremonies were more relevant. He went into a convent and "kidnapped" some nuns- and ran away.

Q: He raped nuns?

A: No, he "kidnapped" them. He carried them away.

Q: He kidnapped them?

A: He led them astray. He kidnapped them from God.

Q: He also committed suicide.

A: That's true. So his Catholicism is extremely contradictory. But his committing suicide had to do with a woman too. He was old and, as usual, there are different versions of his death and of his motivation. This is also typically Portuguese...The "boatos", which means rumors, come with the territory. They live off characters like Castelo Branco and his frantic persona. He made a living as a writer. He wrote on demand, so to speak.

Q: Well, maybe there is a link between Chile and Portugal. The ocean. Portugal is a maritime nation with great sea explorers. I believe this appeals to you because your father was a sailor?

A: Yes, and my grandfather as well.

Q: They used to tell you stories. You also directed "Treasure Island" and "The Three Crowns of the Sailor" in which navigation...

A: I also shot "Litoral" in Chile.

Q: Let's talk about that mini-series, the stories of the sea. Did that influence your childhood?

A: Of course.

Q: Your father being a sailor?

A: Yes, we're a family of storytellers. My grandfather was a storyteller. But the funny thing is that he was a supervisor on German ships in Chile, which operated the route Puerto Montt - Punta Arenas. That's how I came to know all these stories.

Q: But there are also inland stories, called "tierra adentro". Most of Chile's territory is not adjacent to the sea. It turns its back on the sea.

A: Not always...That is very Spanish. Spain used to build its main cities in the interior. This was also because of pirates. Seaports were not very safe, so people moved to the mountains and settled in the interior, without climbing too much. They were neither mountain people nor sailors. But there is a fascination for the sea, at least for me.

Q: You shot "City of Pirates" as well.

A: That's true.

Q: What is your relationship with Portuguese culture? You come from a Hispanic culture, from Chile. Brazil, which borders on Chile, has its origins in Portugal. What connects you? There is of course another great filmmaker, Manoel de Oliveira, who, like you, is a fan of the Romanesque and fantasy. He is completely detached from naturalism in cinema. How far back does your relationship with Portugal go? Where do you stand regarding the language, as well as the Portuguese culture?

A: To make it simple, I would say Portugal allowed me to build a bridge to Chile, after my exile in France, without having to leave France. How can I put this...Portugal is similar to Chile in terms of size. It's a small country. At the same time, it's a small country, which once was a great empire. It was kept until 1973, right? So to me, certain aspects of Portugal were comparable to Chile. Small countries are like provinces, they communicate like mirrors. There is a certain complicity between them. He also referred to Poland, which is hardly a small country. But that was an idea of his. And that always impressed me because I feel the same...I'm attracted to the Netherlands... and the Nordic countries... In the end, it's about the countries that do not want to build an empire, that do not want to win...

Q: But they build an empire anyway.

A: Yes, and that is not bad in itself. For instance, even though Austria is a small country, it does not hold as much appeal as the other countries. It is equally fascinating, mostly as a small country, much more than as a great nation.

Q: What about Portuguese and its sonority?

A: Portuguese was formed in opposition to Spanish. It's the Galician-Portuguese language, a medieval language spoken by the Spaniards. The medieval lyric poems of Santa Maria das Cantigas were written in Galician-Portuguese. But Portugal's numerous independence wars have forced language to become elusive and hidden. It's a language that loves to hide. People are used to saying one thing to mean another. They are not straightforward, they don't say things clearly and they don't wrap up. I believe this enables us to make fiction that "overflows", according to Robinson's concept. When using dialogue or voice-over, this allows the image to win, because the voice... and the words are not clear. They do not kill the image. They let the image breathe. This doesn't sound like much, because in the end, we all speak the same language. There are variations but... A propos Austria, Karl Kraus referred to a mask, a "hearing mask", a "sonorous mask". Languages develop this "sonorous mask", in which we place silence and suspension points. On the other hand, we have France, which uses explicit speech but is becoming more and more implicit. After 20 years, I started noticing two aspects in interviews and in conversations with my French friends: One of the aspects is that we say more and more things casually. We could be, say, at a restaurant in Marseilles, and someone could come up to me and say casually: "I'm going to kill you and it will happen soon." But they would say this in a way we would not even take it in. So this is becoming normal. Portuguese people do not like to kill or to say things casually. They say things in a way that speech does not become central, it "floats" instead. And that is very good for poetry. The other thing I've noticed in France recently is that people ask me a lot more often whether I feel French. This question would be unthinkable when I arrived here.

Q: It has to do with identity.

A: It's true. I was asked that question four times in interviews.- Are you French, do you feel French? - "Do you feel French or Chilean?" This official speech pervades conversation. And France also doubts its own Frenchness. Carlos Saboga wrote the script. He's written several screenplays in Portugal. His work is impressive. He is very flexible and available. I wrote some scenes based on summaries. And sometimes I need to write additional scenes while we are shooting. I asked for his advice, of course. You should

always have a minimum of courtesy in this job; or a certain amount of courtesy. He has all those qualities, and he knows Portugal. He showed me all the intricacies of modern Portugal.

Q: There are scenes that didn't exist in the novel and that you created. I don't know who wrote this one, for instance: Father Dinis' "chamber of secrets".

A: No, I was the one who wrote that.

Q: It reminds me of "The Shining", of the forbidden room.

A: in Overlook Hotel.

Q: Exactly.

A: The child who cannot enter the room. Father Dinis forbid him from entering. But he did so the Portuguese way. He would prefer him not to enter, but once he is there he says, "I'll explain it to you." So this flexibility is a national specialty.

Q: You also had a very important collaborator, because the photography is absolutely stunning. It's one of the best I've seen in a long time. I'm talking about André Szankowski. Is he a Polish citizen hiding in Portugal or a Portuguese citizen hiding under a Polish name?

A: He's Brazilian.

Q: He is from Brazil?

A: He is a Brazilian citizen, just 30 years old and he'd never done a feature film. He'd done advertising, which proves that advertising is not always a killer. He wanted to do cinema, so we got along very well. As he found out, he had everything to gain. Paulo and I went through, all the great names...

Q: Paulo Branco, your producer.

A: And Paulo said, "I'd rather have someone who has everything to gain and nothing to lose, instead of someone who is going to worry about their reputation" because, originally, this was merely a soap opera for Portuguese television. And it developed gradually. Only Paulo believed in the film from the beginning. He always believed that this would be, how should I put it, the "movie of his life".

Q: At the same time, it's also the movie of your life, because you shot it under a serious condition, you were suffering. But the film emanates creativity, vitality and control.

A: That's what happens when you're not sure if you are going to survive. Everything becomes somewhat dramatic. That's obvious. Every day is a victory. I didn't know if I would make it until the end of the shoot. But in the end, I did a lot more because everything flowed perfectly during the shoot. It's a joy to finally see Portuguese actors perform in Portuguese instead of using bizarre languages they have to adapt to. Some Portuguese actors are forced to memorize dialogue in German or French. And French is not as familiar as it used to be. This makes people lose about 80% of their energy. And that's what I had to gain. This film is also a sort of, I wouldn't say closure because I don't like that and I already did another film for Beauborg after that, a short film about Jean Painlevé. We had the screening last week in Beauborg.

Q: The director of scientific films.

A: Yes. It is 50 minutes long, it's a medium feature. But I do agree that this was one of the most important movies I made, even though I do not intend to stop here.

Q: You shot the film in digital, with a Genesis camera.

A: The mythical Genesis camera.

Q: You usually used a Red before, like Soderbergh, who speaks highly of it.

A: It's not that different. Genesis is kinder on the actors. But it depends on the way you use it. Funnily, the cinematographer, André, was fascinated by the indirect special effects. It's actually a contradiction when working with digital cinema, but most of the effects were made on location, with little explosives, special lamps and lenses used in a different way. And that worked, so I wasn't too out of place.

Q: You say this is one of your most theoretical films. But I would say, perhaps contradictorily, it's a film of reconciliation with the great Romanesque cinema, with sets, stories and characters somewhat neglected nowadays.

A: It's post-New Wave, naturalistic, of everyday chronicles. And I believe Jorge Arriaga's music contributes to this. The music is magnificent, extremely symphonic and broad,

Q: in the vein of (great film composer) Miklos Rozsa...

A: Yes.

Q: or Hollywood.

A: That's correct. The background music is by Freitas Branco, another Branco. He's a Portuguese, a post-Romantic musician, so to speak. Freitas Branco created the central theme, based on a movement of the second symphony. But speaking of reconciliation with the Romanesque, my motivation is to understand why and when did contemporary cinema lose touch with the Romanesque. So when I speak of theory, I'm not referring to avant-garde. I've become too "a-chronical", anti-chronical even. There is an expression "survival", "Nachleben" which allows for supposedly archaic elements to be brought back to life indirectly, like soap operas or the Romanesque. People say, "You don't do that anymore." I don't understand why. It seems arbitrary to me to say that sort of thing. The richest films in terms of theory are certain American movies like, it may be a phase, but at the moment, "Winchester 73" is the film that surprised me most in terms of theory.

Q: Anthony Mann's western.

A: Yes.

Q: You have a French team as well. The second part has a lot of French dialogue and you have the whole new generation of actors: Léa Seydoux, Clotilde Hesme, and Melvil Poupaud, your fetish actor who you worked with when he was 6.

A: He is mostly a friend.

Q: Right.

A: There is a whole group of French actors, like Malik Zidi, starring in this film. According to Castelo Branco, all this takes place in France. The character has a big connection with France. The character of Dinis is much more French than Portuguese. He was born in Italy. He spent most of his childhood and adolescence in France. Then, he returned to Portugal where he became a priest. In the end, people say he may have gone to India or the East. I myself prefer to imagine him in a "Phalanstere" in south Chile.

Q: Amidst all the Romanesque, there are the incredible locations where you shot. I don't know Lisbon all that well, but there are palaces and splendid houses. And inside, there are certain perspectives. The scenes often take place in front of an ajar door, where a maid stands eavesdropping. There is always something, there are windows, there is always a series of things half blocking the view, in the scene. There is also the small childhood theatre, where you see those cardboard characters. It reminds us of the Shakespearean "Teatro Mundi," which claims that life is a scene, the whole world is a scene.

A: It's true. But I only pay attention to the technical aspects, as usual. I directed this film. To me, those things were a way of creating uncertainty. The child we see at the end and in the beginning, who tells the story and, suddenly, it's at the end. Could the child have imagined or dreamed all that before dying, still a child, and all that was merely a projection? Or has the child really lived through all that and, at the time of death, the child returns to childhood? That dubiousness lingers in the air. And the theatre allowed me to give it more credibility, like the magic lantern Bergman so often uses. Above all, it's financially handy. Every time we had a low budget, we'd use the theatre. We shot the scene and used voice-over narration.

Q: At the same time, the film stands out for its extraordinary long takes. Most of the time there are no close-ups. You use long takes together with camera movements. Sometimes there are contemplative sequences, but the important aspect is the camera's mobility, shooting around characters and crossing rooms. Is it a way to maintain continuity in acting, for the actors?

A: That's correct. Once you decide on the angle, you have the possibility to explore the spaces and mostly the sets. It gives you time to feel them. The sets become a character more relevant than usual. My approach is not to show the set and move on to the scene. The actors are not independent from the sets. The movement of the camera and of the actors creates a game, which I find fascinating. This is probably one of the most theoretical films I've made in which I finally had the time, the will and the commitment to prove my theories. It is contradictory in a sense, because I was afraid of this, of making the film too theoretical, but I don't think it's exaggerated. I wanted to work every day with the concepts of involvement and detachment.

Q: Involvement and detachment?

A: Yes, involvement. Detachment. It was Norbert Elias who explored this concept. He refers to something else, but I refer to films. So, in a film, there is a contemplative aspect and an aspect you can partake in, therefore "fauvist". We concentrate on the action and on the narrative. Whenever you shoot a film this way, the way we shot this one, you have both aspects at the same time.

Q: Are you perhaps returning to your origins?

A: Brecht was often misinterpreted and pigeonholed as a mere "estranger". But there is movement in Brecht. Watching "Galileo Galilei", you feel moved by his story and at the same time, you feel detached and step back. Well, Norbert Elias is German and used the concept of "Distanzierung".

Q: Detachment.

A: Yes.

Q: Not the same as in Brecht but...

A: It's "Verfremdung" in German. Yes, but he uses the word "Distanzierung" instead, which is of Latin origin. I think he is referring to detachment in the sense of contemplation, and not to Brecht's critical detachment. There is emotion in Brecht, contrarily to what people may think.

Q: I also find interesting in the film certain "Ruiz-esque" aspects, like totally unexpected sequences, either high-angle shots or low-angle shots, like the one over the glass table, which contains pieces of paper stuck to the glass, seen from below. Or the reflection on the teacup, showing one of the characters. Those are signatures of yours, in a way.

A: Yes, but believe it or not, to me that is a way to gain time. Contrarily to what one might think, those shots are very economical, because the surprise effect and the time you need to restart allow you to skip certain parts and boring shots, so to speak. If you insert a surprising image, which has a distracting effect, that image will allow you to concentrate. The film is somewhat long, as you know. So I needed to concentrate. I'm talking about the teacup, mostly, because it conveys a dialogue that would otherwise feel like a tunnel. But I don't have too many of those sequences in the film.