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REQUIEM

(DRAMA — SWISS-FRENCH-PORTUGUESE)

A CAB Production/Filmograph/ Gemini Films/Madragoa Filmes co-production in association with Swiss Romand TV TSR, WDR. (International sales, Gemini.) Produced by Gerard Ruey, Jean-Louis Porchet, Alain Tanner, Paulo Branco.

Directed by Alain Tanner. Screenplay, Tanner, Bernard Comment, based on the novel by Antonio Tabucchi. Camera (color), Hugues Ryffel; editor, Monica Goux; music, Michel Wintsch; production designer, Joao Torres; costume designer, Isabel Quadros; sound (Dolby SRD), Henri Maikoff; assistant director, Anne Deluz. Reviewed at Cannes Film Festival (Directors Fortnight), May 17, 1998. Running time: 99 MIN.

Paul	Francis Frappat
Pierre	Andre Marcon
Father	Alexandre Zloto
Isabel	Myriam Szabo
Headwaiter	Jose Manuel Mendes

By DEBORAH YOUNG

Fifteen years after "In the White City," vet Swiss director Alain Tanner returns to Portugal with an adaptation of Italo writer Antonio Tabucchi's "Requiem." The film, like the novel, is a salute to Portuguese scribe Fernando Pessoa, who appears as a mysterious character in this

quiet, unhurried work that is dominated by literary concerns. Meticulously shot, heavy on atmosphere and 100% cerebral, pic is highly recommended for book lovers but offers little to rouse the enthusiasm of even art-house regulars unless they are planning a trip to Lisbon.

Set on the hottest day of August, with no one on the deserted streets besides a few extras, the story stretches from noon to midnight as French writer Paul (Francis Frappat) waits for an appointment with "a ghost." He whiles away the day meeting long-dead friends from his memories, who materialize out of nowhere with complete naturalness.

Pierre (Andre Marcon), a poet with whom he had a girlfriend (Myriam Szabo) in common, takes him to eat in a local restaurant (recipe details are furnished by the cook). In one of the more curious apparitions, his father appears as a young sailor (Alexandre Zloto) and demands that Paul recount the way he died. The legendary Pessoa — never named, but the well-read viewer is supposed to guess who he is — reflects on life and literature over dinner.

As often as the big Pessoa emotions — nostalgia and remorse — are mentioned, Tanner and co-scripter Bernard Comment make no effort to show Paul in their grip. Frappat, a likable actor with melancholy eyes, keeps Paul carefully under control whether he's dancing with his lost love or accusing his best friend of pushing her to suicide.

Audience is invited to study the idea of feelings, not to experience them, and therein lies a coldness that keeps the viewer at arm's length from this film. Unlike another Tabucchi adaptation set in Lisbon, the Marcello Mastroianni starrer "According to Pereira," there is no strong storyline around which the hero could develop.

Straining to keep the atmosphere as uniform as possible, Tanner has junkies, gypsies and cemetery guards talk with the same measured refinement and curbside philosophizing as the intellectuals. Typifying pic's gentlemanly cognac-and-cigar atmosphere is Paul's visit to a private club, where the headwaiter (Jose Manuel Mendes, so refined he could give Prince Charles etiquette lessons) wagers a bottle of 1952 port on a billiard shot.

Lisbon's winding streets and sea vistas are lovingly shot by cinematographer Hugues Ryffel. Underlining pic's thoughtful mood and heat-induced lethargy, editor Monica Goux makes sure that not even the shots change in a hurry.



WAITING GAME: French writer Paul (Francis Frappat) waits for an appointment with "a ghost" in director Alain Tanner's "Requiem."

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