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CITY OF PIRATES

translation, from Cahiers du Cinema, Oct. 83

".... City of Pirates is a sort of film festival in itself: as always with Ruiz, a whole series of disparate and unequal films meet: it merits critique alone for his unique use of the medium. And above all, how should one speak of Ruiz? How can one ^{situation} ~~pinpoint~~ his film (when the reader doesn't know what precedes it)? How can one add a new critical system to the abundant literature around the work of this filmmaker, who builds his work in the form of an enigma. One clue: City of Pirates belongs to the romanesque vein, (onirique) and maritime as begun with Three Crowns of the Sailor. Another: in following this direction Ruiz does not end up with an adventure film that could (predict) his last film, but comes back to his most personal theme. Towards his passion for illusion, the labyrinths of ideas and false ideas, words and false words, characters and false characters among which he knows no one will lose and weaves a spell on his viewers. Ruiz constructs his films along musical rather than theatrical (lines/rules) and each of his works is a variation on a series of themes that appear, amplify, intertwine. In City of Pirates there is again this idea of eternal return, an immortal and murderous child crosses the ages (years); there are pirates: they are one, there is the fiancée of the child who becomes that of the pirates; there is the allegorical garden where a battle that is as obscure as it is/^adeterminant factor, goes on off-camera. Anne Alvaro and Hughes Quester, both surprising, find here their best roles and the scenes with both of them are among the best in the film. Ruiz succeeds, thanks to them and better than ever, a polyphonic treatment of his characters, who are never really where you see them. Among the diabolical Ruizienne production, one thing that's always bothered me a little, is the weight--very South American--of the surrealistic imagery, the bric-a-brac of symbols and fetishes on which he overloads his miages until they are opaque. But one quickly goes beyond all the bounteous plastic; the surprise sustained by each turn in the story, the freedom with which Ruiz intertwe~~aves~~ines the threads of his (intrigues/plots), cannot fail to attract the spectator to the film. City of Pirates is not made to be looked at from the outside, it demands that one immerse oneself in it, that one accept the rules as well as the exceptions and that finally one lets oneself be carried, jolted, by it, as are the film's protagonists, whose situations seem to be played and replayed, ad infinitum."(O.A.) (translation by Nancy Goldman)