

C I N E M A

'Erendira' is enigmatic, playful



Through such works as last year's film *El Norte* and Nobel Prize winner Gabriel Garcia Marquez's novel "One Hundred Years of Solitude," American audiences have been introduced to and entranced by the uniquely Latin American style of "magic realism."

And now that the genre has become the literary vogue across the nation, the time is right for the release of Ruy Guerra's *Erendira*.

Written by Garcia Marquez, and based on a selection from his famous novel, *Erendira* could be described as a hallucinogenic, sarcastic version of Cinderella. Irene Papas stars as a wealthy old woman who, as *Erendira's* (Claudia

Ohana) grandmother and guardian, practically forces her granddaughter to work as a servant and handmaid.

After a strange incident that results in their luxurious mansion burning down, the grandmother decides *Erendira* must pay her back for what's been lost. Thus, they set out on the road where young (underage) *Erendira* becomes promoted by her grandmother as the desert's most desirable prostitute.

The relationship between *Erendira* and her grandmother is complex. While harboring no great love for her granny, *Erendira* refuses to run away and actually, when given a chance at freedom, chooses to return to her life of prostitution. Her rebellion is piqued only when it seems she is falling in love, but even that is undercut most enigmatically.

While not as subtle or as poetic as the Latin American scenes in *El Norte*, Guerra and Marquez include an abundance of visually striking fantasy-like elements that fall under the heading of magic realism. Scenes such as a paper butterfly becoming real and the grandmother seeping green blood are the most obvious examples, but the subtler effects are even more interesting.

In one scene *Erendira* walks into a room filled with flying paper money, kept aloft by an electric fan. She later lies on a bed covered with the same money as the camera pulls back slowly. While not exactly magical, these bits contain an otherworldly feel that suggest a touch of the supernatural.

Irene Papas pulls a powerhouse performance in her characterization of the amoral grandmother. A smuggler, a

madame and ostensibly a parent, she is both pragmatically businesslike and spookily mystical. While not the nicest character in the film, she is certainly the most interesting.

Claudia Ohana does well to hold her own against Papas. Though her part is less interesting, she brings to it something extra that raises *Erendira* above an object of simple erotic adoration. She also ages well through the course of the film, subtly showing the gradual maturation from post-pubesence to adulthood.

The abundance of creative energy in *Erendira* keeps the film original and captivating, and the addition of funky humor near the conclusion brings an unexpectedly appropriate tone to the final scenes. Enigmatic, spooky, visually intriguing and endlessly playful, *Erendira* is also intellectually stimulating. You won't be bored watching it.

If you've already caught "Erendira," check out the campus offerings. Walter Hill's eerie and exciting *Southern Comfort* plays Friday in Room 150 Geology. This *Deliverance*-like tale concerns a troop of city-bred National Guardsman on maneuvers in a Louisiana swamp who provoke the wrath of the local cajuns. A moody score by Ry Cooder sets the appropriate tone for this thriller.

Saturday has two top choices, the police drama *The Onion Field*, about the kidnapping and killing of a police officer, and *Monty Python's Life of Brian*, a wonderfully witty and mildly satirical tale of a reluctant messiah. *Onion* plays in Room 150 Geology; *Brian* in Room 180 PLC.

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