

# ***I AM ADAM! / EU SUNT ADAM! (1996)***

DAN PIȚA

## **Contents (Overview-Synopsis-Characters-Character Analysis-Themes-Scenes)**

### OVERVIEW

*Auteur* Dan Pița was born on October 11<sup>th</sup>, 1938 in Dorohoi, Romania. He is one of the most gifted directors of the Romanian golden age of cinematography. He is the director of an impressive number of artistic films, such as *Paso Doble* (1985), *November, the Last Ball* (1989), *Top Hotel* (1992), *Pepe and Fifi* (1994) or *Second Hand* (2005), to name just a few of his cinematographic achievements. In 1986, he was awarded Honorable Mention for *Paso Doble* at The Berlin Film Festival.

*Film* The film is a parable on the atrocities of communist psychology and identity. It is a plunge into the deepest and darkest secrets of the men in power at the time of communism. At the same time, it is a revelation of the displaced and disappeared world of the high bourgeoisie and aristocracy in pre-communist Romania. The director criticizes the violence, harshness and coldness of the minds of people belonging to the communist regime, as well as their ascension through lies, deceit and crime. The main character in the movie, Adam, is representative of primordial man and of mankind before fall and sin.

*Background* The movie is based on a short story by the Romanian author and philosopher, Mircea Eliade, titled "With the Gypsy Girls" ("La Țigănci", 1963). It narrates the mishaps of an older man as he walks the hot and sunny streets of Bucharest until he reaches a place where he finds gypsy girls. Both the short story and the movie are parables of the stages of dying.

### SYNOPSIS

*I am Adam!* is a fantastic parable on death, featuring the life and memories of Adam, a cello player and teacher. The movie starts with scenes of a concert he gives in front of an audience. Then a series of incidents begin happening to him. He is summoned by a minister, Anca Vogel, to her manor to tell her tales from his past. He visits one of his former students, who denies knowing him. And he is eventually taken to the security office for interrogation. There he recounts, with a plethora of details, his past life and that of his students and family. As he narrates, the images start overlapping and people from the present day merge with the characters from the past. He is increasingly tortured by the security inspectors until he falls, exhausted, simply saying 'I am Adam'. In the final scene in the movie he performs in front of an audience composed of all these real and fantastic characters.

### CHARACTERS

Adam – a cello teacher  
Inspector Dumitrescu – a security inspector  
The other inspector – a security inspector  
Anca Vogel – a minister  
Major Iosif – a politician

### CHARACTER ANALYSIS

#### **ADAM**

Professor Adam is a musician and music teacher. He is highly imaginative and trusting. He is trying to get along with everyone and seems to have an innate idealism. He is destabilized by his own memories, which haunt him and the ones around him.

*Imaginative* Adam is highly imaginative and makes up stories with ease, mixing truth with fiction as a writer would. He can tell a story for hours, with a plethora of details on events and people. He resurrects a whole world of the dead, of his family and friends who have passed away or disappeared in mysterious conditions.

*Trusting* Adam also seems trusting. He has no problem telling everything he knows to the security inspectors, who are famed for extracting information from people in order to harm them and other people. Nonetheless, Adam tells them everything and in detail, unaware of the lies and deceit in front of him. All along, the security inspectors are trying to convict him.

*Cooperative* Adam is cooperative with the security inspector and with minister Anca Vogel. He goes to her place and tells her the stories of his family and friends every time he is called on. He goes there in a car guarded by police officers and is received in a big hall where he tells his stories. He is open and carefree concerning the implications of what he is saying, by which he is actually exposing people who have become important in the political class of the day.

*Unstable* With all his mild and carefree nature, Adam is unstable as we can see in the memories he has of his family. In a sense, we can infer that the double identity attributed to the security inspectors could be a whim of his wild imagination. He used to have an intense secret life, as we can witness in his recollections.

### **Alex/Dumitrescu**

Inspector Dumitrescu is the stereotype of ruthless, cold-blooded security inspector. The movie implies that he is Adam's former student, Alex, who has come to mystify his identity in order to have a good position in the Communist government.

*Insensitive* Inspector Dumitrescu is insensitive to Adam's needs and keeps pushing him to go on narrating and exposing whatever he has to expose. When Adam asks for a glass of water, he is refused by a voice in the background and Inspector Dumitrescu does not move a finger. He inspects Adam just like a scientist would inspect an insect.

*Curious* At first, Inspector Dumitrescu seems very curious about the identity of Major Iosif. He questions and interrogates, searches and researches, comparing data in order to see if what Adam says is true. He is inquisitive and seems very interested in the events Adam is retelling. He plays along with Adam's storytelling, acting like the interested and curious inspector.

*Calm* Knowing that Adam's memories involve the exposure of his own true identity, Inspector Dumitrescu is, nevertheless, very calm. He keeps his cool all along, which is part of his cold-blooded nature. He does not get scared easily, knowing that power is in his hands.

### **Darvari/Another investigator**

The other investigator/Darvari is just as ruthless and cold-blooded as Inspector Dumitrescu. He is also Adam's former student, Darvari, who wants to keep his identity hidden so as to keep his position in the communist system.

*Insensitive* The second inspector/Darvari is equally insensitive as the first, and he is solely interested in hushing up Adam. He does not care about the old man's feelings and is interested only in his own well-being. Like Inspector Dumitrescu, he treats Adam with coldness and lack of empathy.

*Confident* Due to his position of power, the inspector is also very self-confident. He does not fear Adam but gets equally absorbed by his narrative. He asks questions with a lot of skill and is shrewd. He shows no sign of weakness or hesitation.

### **Major Iosif**

Major Iosif is the type of man who has gained an important position in the Communist system by treading on the backs of people who lost houses and lives. He is ruthless, corrupt and unappreciative.

*Unappreciative* Major Iosif is unappreciative. Concerned with defending his position and not being exposed, he treats his former teacher with disrespect and contempt. He throws him out of his house and denies being the Iosif who used to be Adam's student when, in fact, he is. He has no respect or appreciation for his former teacher.

*Uncooperative* Major Iosif is equally uncooperative. He obstructs the inspectors' work and keeps denying, even to them, that he is Adam's former student. When the police bring in evidence, he says that maybe he has forgotten due to having been treated ill in his childhood and youth.

### **Minister Anca Vogel**

Minister Anca Vogel is also a party activist but she has a taste for stories. She asks Adam to go to her place to tell her stories of his previous life. In the movie, she also appears as the matron of the brothel, To the Gypsy Girls.

*Curious* Minister Vogel is curious and inquisitive. She asks Adam to tell her stories about his past and keeps asking him questions about it. She seems to have an appetite for personal narratives and uses Adam as entertainment. She is an avid listener.

*Satisfied* Since Adam is more than happy to oblige, Minister Vogel is very satisfied by the stories he tells her. She keeps calling him to her place, and her appetite for his personal narratives never seems to be appeased.

## THEMES

### SOCIETY

**Class** The movie also problematizes the gap between the political class (the leaders) and the intellectuals, represented by Adam and his nephew. The class of leaders is represented by Minister Anca Vogel and by Major Iosif. They live in enormous old mansions that they stole from previous owners who were considered enemies of the state. Their houses are imposing. They have the finest furniture; they have servants and they wear the best clothes. In contrast, Adam and his nephew live in a derelict house, with an attic full of ghosts, old and shabby furniture and little means for decent living. The director shows how the class of intellectuals was disparaged and treated unfairly during the communist era. He also hints at the abuse of the former aristocracy and high bourgeoisie who were sent to prison, deported or dispossessed. There is a clear criticism of the communist upper class in the movie, in particular through the character of Major Iosif.

**Myth** Myth appears in the movie in the entanglement of Adam's memories with dreams and fantasy. It appears, in its most conspicuous form in the scenes from the brothel, where Minister Anca Vogel becomes the matron. The whole film itself is based on a short story by Mircea Eliade, a Romanian fantasy writer and philosopher, who wanted to show the entrance to another, deathlike reality. In the movie, the brothel appears as the location of utter decay and debauchery to which Adam succumbs. It symbolises the transition from a pre-fall state of innocence to a state of sin and corruption of the soul. The myth consists in the creation of a parallel world where each character in the main narrative has a second life in a world filled with sins and secrets. The director played on the fantastic element present in Eliade's work to create an atmosphere of dream, chaos and delusion in his movie.

### POLITICS

**Power** The idea of power is epitomized through the character of Inspector Dumitrescu/Alex and the other inspector/Darvari. They each embody the ruthless and cold-blooded state security inspector who interrogates mercilessly and is clever enough to find the truth through the net of lies and deceit. Power is asserted over Adam with every question and every interrogation. When he asks for a glass of water or a break, he is refused by a voice in the background. The director wanted to point out how state security inspectors inflicted terror and oppression on their prisoners through their calculated and shrewd means of deception and manipulation.

### PSYCHOLOGY

**Identity** The theme of identity is prevalent in the movie. First of all, there is a permanent questioning of the identity of the main character, which climaxes in his exclamation 'I am Adam!' Thus, the director suggests that the musician is representative of primordial man, before sin and the fall from paradise. However, this character sins like any other, goes to the brothel and seems to lie a lot. The problem of identity is evident in the exchange of roles of the other characters in the movie. For example, Inspector Dumitrescu becomes Alex, and the other inspector becomes Darvari, both former students of professor and music teacher Adam. This play of identity points to the mystification present during the communist era, when many people changed their identities either to enter the Party or to escape from the claws of the state security. Thus, in his thematization of identity shifts, the director points to the falsification and mystery of the self, and, ultimately, of the principled, perfect first man.

### QUEST

**Introspection** In a way, the movie can also be considered Adam's introspection into his own identity and former life. Adam is a talented narrator, bringing many details and characters into his descriptions. The movie represents his plunge into his own problematic and complex personality. On the outside, Adam is a decent, if poor, intellectual, respectful and well-mannered. On the inside, in his secret life, there is lust and sexual drive. There is also the potential of romantic love which remained unfulfilled. As his nephew avowed at the beginning of the movie, most of his numerous family has passed away and he is now left alone with his nephew. This is why he is searching for his former students, Alex and Darvari. However, what he finds is his own self in the end.

## APPEARANCE

**Secrets** The theme of secrets appears in the guise of Adam's former students' lies about their identities. They have all become members of the state apparatus – Major Iosif works at the ministry, while Alex and Darvari are security inspectors. They all falsified their identities as children of bourgeois parents, saying they are part of the working class. They forged a whole new life and identity for themselves and have no interest in anyone finding out about it. When Adam visits Major Iosif, the latter denies having been Adam's student and throws him out of the house. Thus, the director portrays the mystification of lives and identities during Communism. In those times, being the child of a bourgeois or aristocratic family was considered a crime. Therefore, the three former students of Adam forged new identities for themselves in order to be accepted and to have good positions in the communist system.

## PAST

**Memory** The whole movie is, in a sense, Adam's work of memory. He remembers, in accurate detail, as the security inspectors remark, events and characters from the past. He moves from one memory to the next with ease, until he constructs a whole network of stories which entrap their listeners. In a way, he is like Scheherazade, telling stories in order to save his life. In the end, we cannot be sure what is fiction and what is truth, and it appears that what is real is actually false, and that lies are the ultimate truth. The work of memory involves a plunge into a parallel world where we witness the casual and happy life of the high bourgeoisie, before the advent of Communism. The director draws a parallel between this world and the the present communist one, showing the ugliness and corruption of the latter.

## SCENES

*ADAM PLAYS THE CELLO* In front of an audience that is rotating around him, Adam plays the cello. He is deeply concentrated, while the audience watches intently. The peculiarity of the audience is that they are all dressed the same.



**A CHILD PLAYS THE CELLO** While Adam is shown playing the cello, we see images of a child also playing the cello to a large audience. We assume they are playbacks from Adam's childhood and that the child is Adam himself.



**THE CELLO LESSON** Adam gives cello lessons to make a living. He has a nephew, who is an actor. The nephew interrupts and disturbs the cello lessons while making noises in the attic above. He then comes in the room and tries to impress the young woman, whom Adam is teaching, with his acting expertise.



*THE WORLD IN THE ATTIC* During the cello lesson, Adam's nephew and a boy are up playing in the attic. The nephew tells the boy there are many ghosts in there and makes a lot of noise to prove his point. The noise disturbs Adam and his student and the former interrupts the lesson.



*FAMILY TALES* Adam's nephew comes down in the house and he starts talking to the cello student. He tells her tales about their family and how numerous they used to be. He also tells her about his theatre career.



*ADAM RECEIVES A PHONE CALL* While his student was still there, Adam receives a mysterious phone call. He is very serious while he is speaking and he says that he has to leave after he hangs up the phone.



*ADAM IS DRIVEN AWAY AT NIGHT* A group of men in smart suits show up at Adam's house at night. They take Adam out of his house and lead him to their car. In silence, they drive to a luxurious manor.

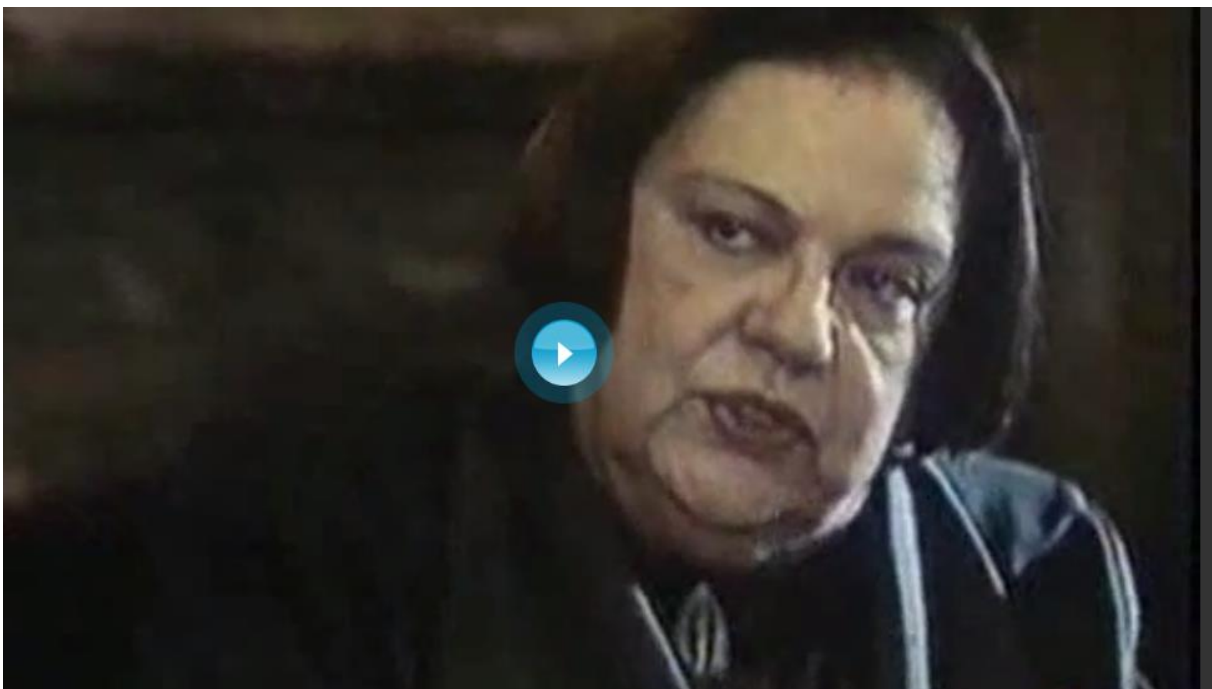




*SCENES FROM ADAM'S CHILDHOOD* During the car drive, we see images from Adam's childhood. He is sick and a butler tends to him.



*ADAM GOES TO SEE MINISTER ANCA VOGEL* The men take Adam to a spacious room in the manor. He is to meet minister Anca Vogel, who expects him. She wants him to tell her stories from when he was younger. He avers to be a gifted story-teller.





**ADAM VISITS MAJOR IOSIF** Adam goes to pay a visit to Major Iosif, who he thinks is his former student, from a school in Mantuleasa Street where he used to be the principal. Adam would like to meet his former student and is eager to see Major Iosif.



**ADAM IS THROWN OUT OF MAJOR IOSIF'S HOUSE** The major denies being Adam's former student, saying that he comes from a working class family and does not know Adam. He tells Adam to get out of his house. Major Iosif also chides the housemaid for having let Adam in.



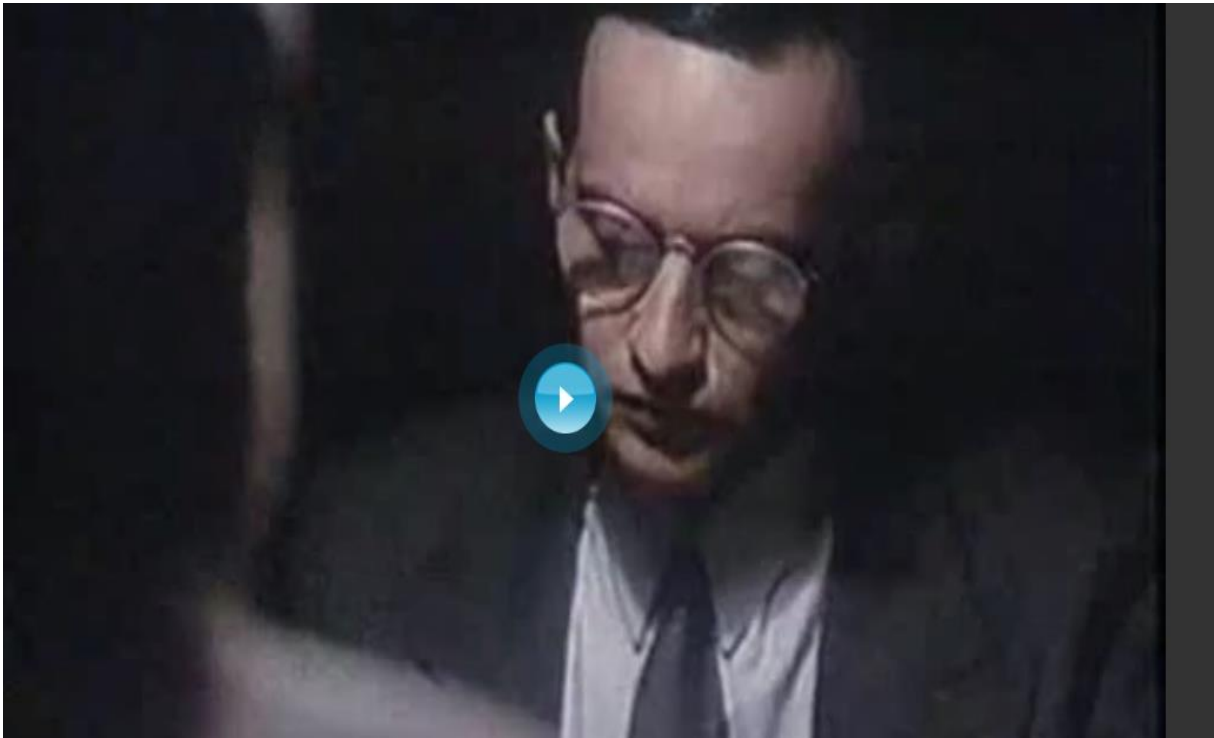
*THE GAME OF CHESS* While Major Iosif discusses with Adam, we are shown images of a man playing chess on his own. He is smartly dressed and watches the scene between the two. He does not seem to be noticed by the other ones in the room though.



*ADAM IS TAKEN TO INTERROGATION ROOM* The scene changes to what appears like an interrogation room. Adam sits on a chair next to a table and a voice from the background tells him what to do. He obeys, somewhat surprised.



*INSPECTOR DUMITRESCU INTERROGATES ADAM* Learning about Adam's search for his older students, the security inspectors order Adam to go to the security office. Inspector Dumitrescu (the same man who was playing chess) interrogates him with cold curiosity. Adam obliges happily, content that he has the occasion to narrate his convoluted memories. Initially, he is questioned about Major losif.



*THE INTERROGATION CONTINUES* As the interrogation continues, we see Adam more and more tired and worn out. We also see warning signs, such as when inspector Dumitrescu puts his gun to Adam's cigarette. The interrogation evolves to include more of Adam's students, Alex and Darvari.



*MAJOR IOSIF AND INSPECTOR DUMITRESCU* We see Major Iosif playing chess with Inspector Dumitrescu. This time, they seem like they know each other very well. The game is played in silence.



*ADAM GOES TO A BROTHEL* For a while, we are shown images from a brothel, where Adam is having intercourse with a few prostitutes. The scene evokes debauchery and depravity.



*MORE INTERROGATING* Adam's interrogation continues a long while. Inspector Dumitrescu reads Adam's deposition and inquires him about his declaration.



*THE WHORE HOUSE AGAIN* We are back at the brothel, where several women in grotesque or vulgar positions are shown. Adam seems to be engulfed in this world. He is enjoying himself but not in the way he does when he plays the cello. He looks horny and lusty





*A COUPLE MAKE LOVE* We are shown images as though from the past, where a young man and woman make love. The woman is younger Marina, whom we saw watching from a distance the scene in minister Vogel's house. The young man is an old acquaintance of Adam, Darvari, his former student. In the movie, he also appears as the other inspector who interrogates and tortures Adam.



*ADAM HAS SEX WITH PROSTITUTES* At the brothel, Adam makes out and makes sex with the prostitutes there. Interestingly enough, the brothel's matron is Minister Vogel, whom we saw in a very decent posture previously. Now she is lascivious and grotesque.



**ADAM GOES TO SEE ANCA VOGEL AGAIN** Again at Anca Vogel's manor, Adam tells his stories of when he was young. Minister Vogel is pleased and urges him to keep telling the story.

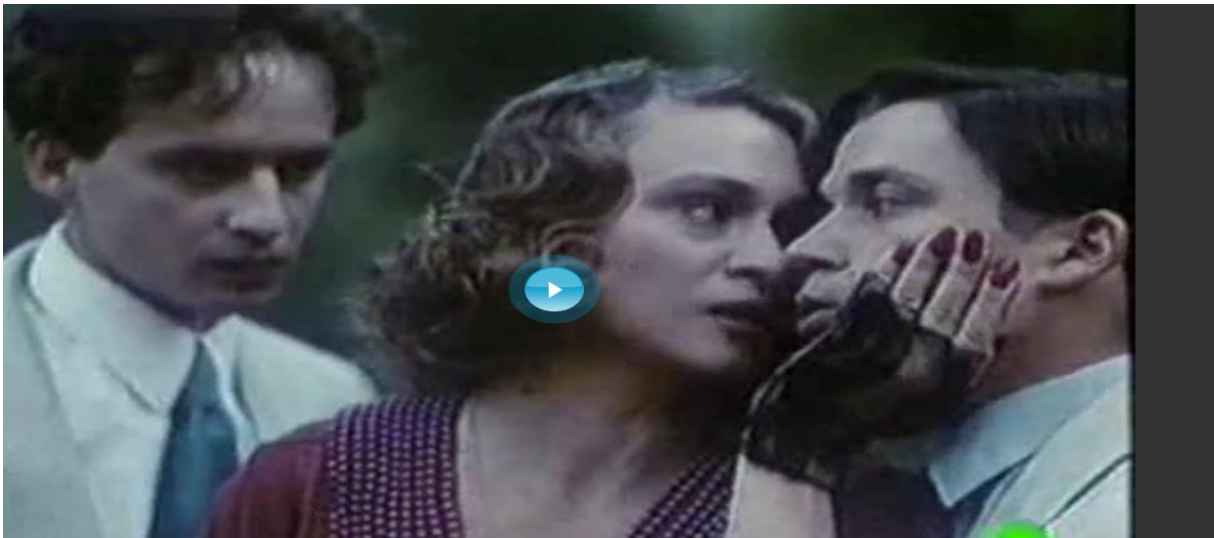


**ADAM GOES TO 'THE GYPSY WOMEN' AGAIN** As he narrates his memories of friends and acquaintances, the images are interspersed with scenes from Adam's previous life when he visited the brothel *To The Gypsy Girls*, a brothel. The images are eerie and incoherent. In this scene, Adam is asked to guess who the gypsy woman is and he doesn't make the right guess.





*MORE SCENES FROM THE PAST* Except for the images at the brothel, we see scenes from the past of what looks like the old bourgeoisie but who are impersonated by present-day characters: inspector Dumitrescu as Alex, the other inspector as Darvari, and the minister as Marina. In this scene, Darvari pledges to marry Marina twenty years from then.



*ADAM IS TORTURED BY THE POLICE INSPECTORS* As time goes by, the security inspectors are increasingly harsh and violent towards Adam. This culminates in tying him up in chains and torturing him. The inspectors keep interrogating him ruthlessly. He looks like a crucified man.



*ADAM DRAWS TO HIS END* Seeing that Adam is no longer responsive, inspector Dumitrescu gives in but the other inspector does not and tries to keep interrogating Adam. At this point, the only thing Adam can say is, 'I am Adam. From before sin'. Adam is exhausted and he seems to draw to his end.



*THE EXCRUCIATING TORTURE* Adam is tortured for hours on end, he is beaten and is physically and mentally abused. This all climaxes in the scene where he is no longer able to keep his eyes open, but he is tied up and beaten over and over again with unimaginable brutality.



*THE WEDDING FROM THE PAST* Several characters in the movie – Marina, Darvari, Alex, etc. – appear at another scene from the past. They are all gathered together due to a wedding of a common acquaintance.



*MARINA CRIES* Perhaps the only proof we have in the movie for making ends meet of what we see and what we hear from Adam is the scene where Marina cries upon seeing him tortured. Here, it is an admission that she knows him and cares for him but, as we can see by the bars, there is nothing she can do about it.



*ADAM LOSES CONSCIOUSNESS* In the interrogation room where he was being tortured by his former students, Alex and Darvari, Adam now lies inert and unconscious. The trauma has been such that he loses consciousness and lies in the bed in the position he had been tortured.

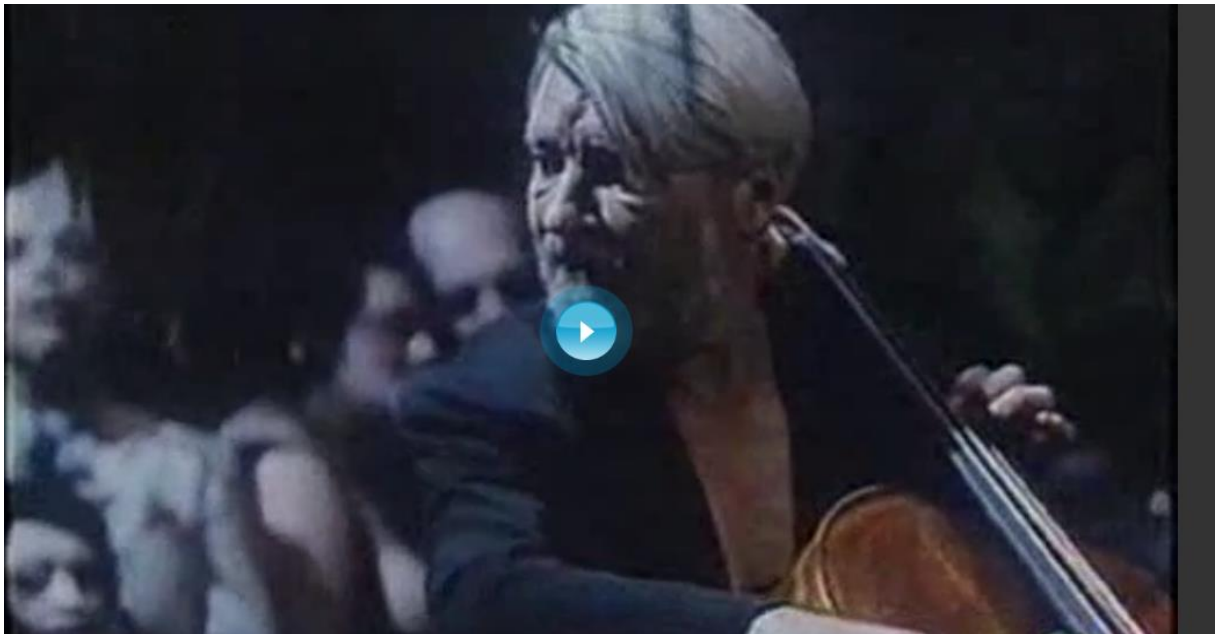


*ADAM GOWS TO A CONCERT* Back at his house, Adam exits, dressed in an elegant, black- and white suite. He is prepared to go to a concert.





*ADAM PLAYS THE CELLO ONE LAST TIME* In the last scenes of the movie, Adam plays the cello again in front of an audience. However, this time the audience is composed of all the characters who appeared in his stories, dead or alive, fictional or real. He plays one last time, an image which shows how utterly lonely he is in a fake world.



*THE CELLO-CHILD* These images of his concert are again interspersed with images from his childhood and younger age. We see a boy – who must be Adam – diligently playing cello.



*THE AUDIENCE OF THE CONCERT* Adam plays but he has a grim look about himself. The audience is the same as in the first scenes with the addition of a few more characters from the movie. The film ends with images from the concerto.

