

Memory of my melancholy whores (2012)

Henning Carlsen

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OVERVIEW

Auteur Henning Carlsen's body of work has primarily contributed to the field of documentary, and literary adaptation films. Two of his most renowned pieces, "Sult" (1966) and "Hør, var der ikke en som lo?" (1978), are precise reconstructions of two major novels by European authors—Knut Hamsun in the first case and Eigel Jensen in the second. Influenced by the *cinéma vérité* style, Carlsen aimed to explore social and political issues and their impact on human existence. Given these characteristics in his filmography and his intellectual affinities, it is not surprising that he chose to adapt the latest novel by Gabriel García Márquez, *Memoria de mis putas tristes* (2004).

Film *Memoria de mis putas tristes* tells, in short, the story of an old man's last opportunity to experience love. Far beyond a conventional plot, the main character falls in love in a situation that pushes the boundaries of moral conventions. The film weaves from this premise a deeper exploration of human experience subjects, such as nostalgia, loneliness, sexuality, death, and other social aspects like censorship, prostitution, and women's conditions. Despite the realistic perspective, Carlsen's adaptation aims to preserve the exploration of the conscience of the old man, as done in Marquez's novel. The close-up of two major characters pretending to be in a phone call is a powerful example of this.

Background Both the film and the novel sparked polemical discussions due to the questionable relationship between the Wise Old Man, aged ninety, and Delgadina, a virgin adolescent. The concern extended beyond the age difference, as the characters met in a brothel at the specific request of the protagonist. This situation proved unacceptable to Mexican activists Lydia Cacho and Teresa Ulloa, who argued that the movie could be seen as an endorsement of minor trafficking and sexual abuse. Consequently, Carlsen's team was compelled to change the film's location from Puebla to Campeche. Despite winning the special prize from the young jury at the Malaga Spanish Film Festival, the film's success was tempered.

SYNOPSIS

The movie opens with a big close-up of the main character, the Wise Old Man, on the phone. A woman, Rosa Cabarcas, answers. Then, he pronounces the polemic words: "Mañana cumpló noventa años y quiero regalarme una noche de amor loco con una adolescente virgen." Despite the strange request, Rosa agrees and finds a young woman for the Wise Old Man. The first part of the movie follows the main character's preparation for the encounter. As we see him taking a shower, dressing, and perfuming himself, flashbacks of his early adolescence and his mature age with different women are shown. From his sexual initiation in a brothel, to the rejection of potential marriage, and his relationships with prostitutes, sex mediates the interactions of the Wise Old Man with women.

The movie consistently navigates through three temporalities: memory, the present, and the inevitable death. These dimensions intertwine in the interaction between the Wise Old Man and Delgadina, as he names the young woman. On their first night together, he realizes that she inspires different feelings in him. For the first time, the relationship is not based on payment for sex but on love.

The new feeling scares the Wise Old Man and the young woman, but they continue the meetings and develop a strong connection. This connection is exposed through writing, as the Wise Old Man publishes love letters in the journal as the movie progresses, exploring his new feelings. However, the meetings are interrupted one night when Rosa Cabarcas' client, a politician, is found dead in the brothel. Consequently, the procuress must flee, leaving the Wise Old Man in desperation due to Delgadina's absence. When they finally reunite, Rosa organizes another encounter between the lovers, but Delgadina is different. She has lost her virginity, which infuriates the Wise Old Man, and he acts with violence.

Some days later, the Wise Old Man meets with Casilda, a prostitute from his past, who persuaded him to search for Delgadina to experience love one last time before his death. He follows the advice and meets her for one last night. In the morning, he returns home, and at sunrise, he cries out his love: "Estoy loco de amor". Somebody answers: "Loco no...demente". He responds: "Quizá...pero hoy el mundo es mucho mejor"... then, a close-up of the Wise Old Man against a long shot of the landscape. His facial expression shows loneliness and sadness... "¿Me escuchas?" ... Silence.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

<i>Wise Old Man</i>	A nonagenarian journalist sieged by his youthful days' nostalgia.
<i>Rosa Cabarcas</i>	The old procuress in charge of organize the night encounters
<i>Delgadina</i>	The virgin adolescent who falls in love of the Wise Old Man.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Wise Old Man

The Wise Old Man is the main character of the film. His real name is never revealed, but his nickname highlights a contrast between his esteemed profession as a journalist, referred to as "master" by his colleagues, and his questionable sexual life. His desire to experience love at the end of his life serves as the catalyst for the events in the film.

Creative The Wise Old Man is a columnist for the local journal. Throughout the film, his writing skills are showcased through the reading of fragments of his love letters. This talent is highlighted by the censorship actions taken against his work. It becomes evident that his writings are impactful and effective as they face censorship.

Violent Throughout the film, the Wise Old Man exhibits a propensity for violence, displaying at least two forms: physical and psychological. Physically, he demonstrates violence when he reacts aggressively upon discovering Delgadina's transformation. He also employs intimidation tactics, such as shouting to express his emotions. Psychologically, he inflicts harm on the women who fall in love with him by showing disdain towards them. Overall, he often attempts to impose his perspective or dismiss the women close to him, showcasing a pattern of controlling behavior.

Lustful The film portrays the Wise Old Man's initiation into sexual life at an early age by a prostitute, depicting it as inherent to his nature. His strong sexual desires overshadow any potential for meaningful relationships, leading him to prioritize interactions with prostitutes over genuine connections. As he matures, he faces persecution for his questionable involvement with brothels and for abandoning his fiancée in favor of engaging with prostitutes.

Nostalgic As the Wise Old Man ages, he engages in a constant exercise of memory, recalling his past life and encounters with women. The presence of Delgadina serves as a reminder of his sexual prowess and the joyful moments he experienced in brothels and during his childhood. These memories resurface frequently, reflecting the Wise Old Man's preoccupation with his sexual experiences and their significance throughout his life.

Rosa Cabarcas

Rosa Cabarcas assumes the role of a procuress ("Alcahueta"), a character archetype inaugurated in Hispanic tradition by the early Renaissance work of Fernando Rojas, "Tragicomedy of Calixto and Melibea," better known as "Celestina." In the film, her role is to persuade an innocent virgin woman, Delgadina, to establish an immoral relationship with a client, the Wise Old Man. This character draws on the literary tradition of the procuress as a mediator in facilitating illicit liaisons, highlighting themes of moral ambiguity and manipulation in the narrative.

Strong The procuress's office is typically depicted as a challenging environment, requiring Rosa to demonstrate strength and authority. Despite maintaining friendly relationships with her clients and making jokes, she is capable of maintaining order in her establishment. However, her strength is contrasted with her health issues, as she is depicted as using a wheelchair, adding a layer of complexity to her character.

Charismatic Rosa is portrayed as a charismatic woman, possessing an important trait necessary for her job. Her charisma enables her to persuade both women to work with her and men to accept her services. This quality allows her to convince Delgadina to provide services to the Wise Old Man and persuades the Wise Old Man to forgive his lover and continue with their regular meetings.

Delgadina

Delgadina is portrayed as a mysterious character in the film. Very little is revealed about her background other than her occupation as a seamstress and her impoverished status. She has minimal dialogue in the film, and her character is primarily constructed through the perspectives of the Wise Old Man and Rosa. Additionally, her name is invented by the Wise Old Man, adding to her enigmatic nature. Delgadina serves as a contrast to the Wise Old Man's lover, characterized by her innocence and passivity.

Innocence Before encountering the Wise Old Man, Delgadina was a simple worker in a sewing plant. Her lack of experience is evident in her interactions with the Wise Old Man, as she struggles to know how to satisfy a man or how to behave around him. This innocence is further highlighted in her transformation towards the end of the movie. As she loses her virginity, her attitude and appearance change, symbolizing the loss of her innocence.

Passivity The passivity of Delgadina is her major trait. She barely moves in the first encounters with the Wise Old Man. Normally she stays quiet and silent, meanwhile he reads, touch her, or simply sleeps at her side. Even though when the Wise Old Man becomes violent, she does not answer or defend herself.

THEMES

Love vs lust Love is the principal theme of the film. However there is mixed all along with the lust. Love is not something pre-determined but rather a construction from the perspective of the Wise Old Man. We never truly know Delgadina experience, so it is hard to say if her motivation is the money for her ill mother or the affection towards the Wise Old Man. In this sense, we are invited to take a position about it. Is the old man truly in love with Delgadina, or is it just lust? Does Delgadina go to the encounters by love or by her money needing? Can it be possible that both characters fell in love under the circumstances they met each other? For the old man, the only explanation for his obsession is love, a feeling he has never experienced before. Here, we perceive the classical dichotomies between lust and love. The Wise Old Man thinks that he could be in love because there is no sex mediating their relationship. Precisely, he concludes that his past interactions with women were false, guided only to self-pleasure. Even if we agree with him, the final dialogue between the Wise Old Man and an unrecognized voice leaves space for uncertainty. Is he in love or insane? In the end, the premise of the film remains unanswered: Can an old man fall in love?

Old Age Old age is a second major theme of the film, as the main character is a nonagenarian man. Even though the Wise Old Man is not the representation of a stereotypical old man. At his age, he continues working, wanting and, in sum, having an active life. Although he is full of nostalgia and regrets, he keeps his intellectual aspiration and his physical desires. So, we assist to his quotidian life, his thoughts, his preoccupation, and his memories. The experience with Delgadina gives him not only the feeling of love, but some knowledge about his own body and expectations. The camera achieves to capture the exploration to aging body and its ways to love. In this sense, the film is a manifesto for the right of the old man to continue living. Despite being obvious, the Wise Old Man draws attention to this in the scene with his cat, whom the veterinarian recommends sacrificing due to its age. The Wise Old Man is infuriated claiming that to be old is not a reason to terminate the life of a living being.

Memory and Nostalgia Memory and nostalgia is another major theme of the film. As the story advances, it becomes clearer that the Wise Old Man is engaging in a memory exercise of his relationships. We are not simply watching flashbacks to understand his motivations or his background; we are remembering with him. The film shows us how the Wise Old Man rebuilds his experiences in the present, which is why the nostalgic effect is so powerful. Meanwhile, as he prepares himself for encounters with Delgadina, he remembers his first sexual encounter, his mother, his past lovers, and, in summary, his youthful vigor. Memory brings the past into the present. The film plays with this through

scenes of the Wise Old Man's sick mother, who haunts her son's mind, reminding him of what she wanted for him and what he could never achieve: to marry and start a family. The movie succeeds in showing us the problem of memory as an individual construction. We never depart from the Wise Old Man's perspective, but we understand that the importance of past events affects his conscience. The place of his past relationships is defined by himself. Some characters have different memories, but we learn about them through their dialogues. Damiana, for example, is almost completely erased except for his first sexual interaction. Nevertheless, she vividly remembers the strong love she felt for the Wise Old Man, which makes her angry with him.

Censorship and dictatorship Although the primary themes of the film revolve around memory and love, it also offers a social critique in two aspects, one of which is related to dictatorship. The story develops in a repressed society dominated by a military presence and censor functionaries. However, we never directly see the government chief; instead, his presence is implied through figures such as officers and agents throughout the movie. The writings of the Wise Old Man must undergo obligatory scrutiny by a censor who eliminates problematic moral and political content, with some pieces even facing prevention from publication. The presence of a repressive power is evident in the military forces that restricts the Wise Old Man's mobility when he attempts to enter public spaces. The problem lies not only in the restrictions imposed by the authorities but also in the corrupt nature of the system. To survive, Rosa Cabarcas deals illegally with local government representatives. Corruption and dictatorships are a part of daily life in some Latin American countries, and the film effectively portrays the subtleties of power dynamics in the region. Despite being far away from dictatorship novels and films, the treatment of this theme stills remains relevant today.

Prostitution and woman status in society The film depicts the status of women in society through their interactions, the spaces they occupy, and their role in public life. In general, women hold subordinate positions in the social structure. The film portrays them primarily as spouses, prostitutes, or as underpaid and exploited workers in highly controlled environments. The movie does not address whether engaging in sexual activities for payment implies consent or is a freely chosen profession. Women work in questionable conditions, pressured by economic necessity. Delgadina exemplifies these conditions. She works as a seamstress in a factory alongside a group of women constantly supervised by a man who even controls when they can speak loudly. Rosa persuades her to work as a prostitute by arguing that she will never earn enough money to afford her mother's treatment other Wise Old Man. Consequently, Delgadina exposes herself to the violence of an old man who, in fact, inflicts violence on her when he believes she has lost her virginity. Despite presenting herself as an independent and strong woman, Rosa Cabarcas' profession subjects her to the authority of men. She works illegally and suffers from a bad reputation, which makes her an outcast. The film effectively portrays this situation through the perspective of the Wise Old Man Man, who ignores these elements. His lack of appreciation for the female characters enables viewers to understand the problematic position of women in the social structure.

Quest The first scene establishes a quest. The Wise Old Man calls Rosa seeking a young virgin. His intention is not clear to us. Is he looking for pleasure? What is behind the strange demand of the old man? Anyway, it is not clear if the character himself knows what he is pursuing. His memories lead us to believe that lust is his primary motivation. However, through dialogues, self-reflection, and character actions, we see that what moves him is a quest for love. Even though the search for romantic love is a universal experience for many, age makes it different. In the Wise Old Man's case, it is the realization that he had never loved that triggers his seeking. The film invites us to question not only the nature of love but also his pursuit itself. It is interesting that the Wise Old Man is the only character in a quest. Rosa is not motivated to look for something; she is just answering the requests of her clients. Delgadina hesitates to participate in the encounters and then falls in love.

Choices/Duties The Wise Old Man's memories are the majority of his key moments in which he had to make decisions. In general, he prioritized pleasure and lust over duties and family. Several examples are shown throughout the film. When he was a child, he decides to flee his parent's house at night to go to the brothel. At his middle age, he breaks off his engagement with Ximena to spend nights with Casilda and other prostitutes. Without making any judgement, the film explores the consequences of this choices. The Wise Old Man is object of popular anger, persecuted by social moral watchers and political agents, and most importantly, he transgresses his family's wishes by not getting married and having kids. At the end of his life, he had never experienced or searched for love, spending his life in temporary, sex-based relationships. Contrary to the main character, Delgadina struggles in choosing

duties over pleasures. Based on the limited information available, her decision to meet the Wise Old Man is motivated by her material needs. She must take care of her sick mother and the salary of the sewing factory is not enough. The contrast of both characters, one preferring normally lust over duties and the other one forcing herself into duties, makes their love more dramatic.

Magical Realism The question of magical realism occupies a special place since the film is a García Márquez's novel adaptation. However, it is not an easy task to transform magical realism's written elements into narrative movie language. Carlsen's film achieves the introduction of some of them in two ways. Magical realism refers to strategies to harmonize fantastical events into the quotidian life in a regular world, so they would not disturb the characters who consider them normal. We perceive this especially in the scenes where the dead mother appears as a physical presence in the Wise Old Man's house and the phone calls, in which the main characters talk without having the phone in hands. Magical Realism is also expressed in narrative structure, specifically in the juxtaposition of temporalities and the nonlinearity of the action. The past, the present and the future are constructed at the same time by the memory. Of course, this is extreme in this Márquez's novel, as in other ones, as for example his Nobel prize word, *One hundred years of solitude*. There are minor events showed in the movie that could be understood as magical realism's marks, such the make-up of Delgadina in the encounters and the black crosses in the photo at the journal office, even the difficult to interpret in this way is an indicator, because the watcher doesn't question its plausibility in a realistic world. It is important to remember that the magical realism is a window to understand the complexities of the Latin American world and the subjectivities of its inhabitants. In other ways, it is a tool to analyze social worlds, especially in the Caribbean region.

SCENES

MEMORIES

Pieces of writing Some writing of the Wise Old Man is showing to the camera. All of them are about old age and memory. He takes out of the machine of the typewriter one page with the title “Una glorificación de la vejez”. He starts to handwrite the moment when he aware that he was aging. Then, a middle age Wise Old Man appears with a doctor who examine him. The doctor tells him that he is fine and that his pain is natural at his age. In the present, the nostalgia of this moment disturbs the Wise Old Man’s face. Then he returns to the night when he was spying his mother. For a moment the young Wise Old Man and his old version exchange a glance.



An introduction The Wise Old Man reads out loud a fragment of his memory. It is evident he takes conscious of his personal’s traits: “feo, tímido y anacrónico”. The reading concludes with the resolution of show himself as he is, instead the image that he created to apparent be another person. During his lecture, we see different plans of his face and his body. He goes directly to the shower. A title tells us that the action take place in anywhere at the Caribbean.



Spying on his mother The Wise Old Man remembers his early adolescent. In this point the linearity of the action is broken and the spectator assist to complex narrative, a mark from magical realism. The character remembers a moment when he was spying her mother singing with another groups of women. A close-up of her face allows to notice an emerald earring. The young Wise Old Man is trapped by his father who gently reprimands him. He excuses himself arguing that his mother is so beautiful. They leave the place quietly, meanwhile the sing of the woman chorus never stops.



The initiation The young Wise Old Man Man visits the town with his father. While he waits for him, he follows a monk who enters a mysterious room. There, he discovers a group of naked prostitutes and stays there spying. Suddenly, one of them discovers him, drags him inside, and puts him in a bed. Then, she covers him with her naked body and looks at him firmly but gently. The scene shows the sexual initiation of the character and mark the tone of his personal history, one guided by lust.



The night escape The young Wise Old Man sneaks out during the night and runs to visit the prostitute who initiated him. The sequence follows him and show the parents sleeping, another prostitute who ignores his presence at the brothel and, finally, how he awakes his lover, shows her the money to pay her services and how she accepts him. At the entrance of the brothel, he crosses paths with the monk he followed to find the place.



An angry crowd The feeling of guilt and shame triggers another memory. Closed in his room, the middle-aged Wise Old Man listens to an angry crowd outside, yelling from the street disapproving harangues of his behavior in the brothel. In general, the people are menacing him for breaking moral rules and, consequently, his commitment with Ximena. In fact, in the crowd, we recognize some of Ximena's family members. As in his present, the guilt leaves the Wise Old Man helplessly lying on the bed.



Pursued Another memory is triggered for the Wise Old Man, when he was around 45 years old. Working late and receiving international news, he notices two of Ximena's family members waiting for him at the exit. He understands that they have the intention to murder him for the dishonor he brought upon the family. The Wise Old Man barely escapes and then decides to go to a bar. There, he shares the news he has just received: the heirs to the Austro-Hungarian throne were murdered. Inspired by his experience, he concludes that death lurks in every corner.



Corruption Drunk, the Wise Old Man goes directly to the brothel to see Casilda. While he is with her, he sees the two thugs who pursued him a few hours ago. They are telling the prostitutes that they have a lot of influence with the governor, revealing moral and political corruption. The persecution of the Wise Old Man is revealed as hypocrisy. The brief conversation is enough for the Wise Old Man to decide to flee from the brothel, despite Casilda's pleas to spend the night with him.



Visions of the sick mother The focus of the film returns to the Wise Old Man as he enters his home and encounters a sick woman who speaks to him. Immediately, we understand that she is a figment of his memory, or maybe, in the magical realism interpretation, a physical presence who announces dead and guilty. The conversation revolves around her expectations for the family life of his son. She had hoped that he would marry a white woman and have three children, including a daughter whom he would name after her, Florida. It is evident that the Wise Old Man never fulfilled this promise, adding to his sense of regret.



The Wise Old Man's job A brief scene depicts the Wise Old Man's place in the local journal. He walks down the street, greets the receptionist, and shakes hands with colleagues. This scene illustrates that the character is active and holds a respectable position in society.



A celebration in the newspaper

The Wise Old Man arrives at the newspaper office to work, where he is welcomed with a surprise party for his birthday. Among the tributes and praise, he receives a gift from his censor, who apologizes for all the words suppressed during years of writing. Additionally, he communicates to the chief editor his intention to leave the job, but the chief editor insists that the Wise Old Man has many years of writing ahead of him. In the end, the Wise Old Man delivers his text, saying it was just a joke. The chief editor looks happy and relieved.



Censored

The Wise Old Man returns to the newspaper to have a conversation with the director. In the director's office, there is an old photo of the group of workers from that period. He notices a black cross painted above the head of some of them, symbolizing their deaths. The picture recalls a magical realism event. The director apologizes and proceeds to explain that the last column was never published because it was completely censored. Despite this, the director expresses his happiness, because he wants that the Wise Old Man, his star, to continue working if he has the energy to do so. The Wise Old Man shows himself very angry.



90th BIRTHDAY

A phone call The scene features two significant close-ups. In the first, we see an old hand dialing a telephone. In the second, we focus on the head of the old man, the Wise Old Man, as he begins the call. On the other end of the line, a woman named Rosa Cabarcas, an old friend, answers. The Wise Old Man demands an encounter with a young virgin woman to celebrate his 90th anniversary. Rosa complains that the request is impossible, but in his opinion, she never has anything that is impossible.



The conversation The film returns to the initial phone call. This time, close-ups focus on the faces of the Wise Old Man and Rosa as the conversation develops further. The Wise Old Man insists on his demand, while Rosa attempts to refuse several times. The Wise Old Man's intentions become mysterious; it is clear he does not want the adolescent to have fun or merely to prove himself. Eventually, Rosa agrees to the proposal and promises to call him back soon.



The sewing factory A long shot shows a group of women working in a sewing factory. In the center, a man is reading 'Sleeping Beauty' out loud. The room's layout displays the power structure, with the man positioned in the center at a higher elevation, exerting authority over the symmetrical placement of the uniformed workers. The camera then proceeds to take a high-angle shot of the group of workers and stops on one of them, Delgadina, who barely pays attention to the reading.



The proposal Another high-angle shot of Delgadina. She is riding her bicycle, remembering the conversation with Rosa Cabarcas, whose voice resonates in her head. The procuress persuades her to spend a night with the Wise Old Man, using two arguments. The first one is the age of the client, who is too old to harm her in any way. The second one is the money she would earn from the encounter. Rosa argues that she would receive in one night more than four weeks' worth of her salary at the sewing factory. That money would be handy to treat her sick mother. Delgadina's face reveals her displeasure; she is not comfortable with the proposal, but she does not have more options.



Damiana The Wise Old Man receives Rosa's call, who informs him that she could contact a young woman for him. However, she could not verify her age and she is afraid of the consequences of the encounter. The Wise Old Man calms her saying that nobody would imprison her. The conversation is listened by Damiana who does cleaning services in his house. A memory of the Wise Old Man shows how at his middle age, he forced her to have sexual relations.



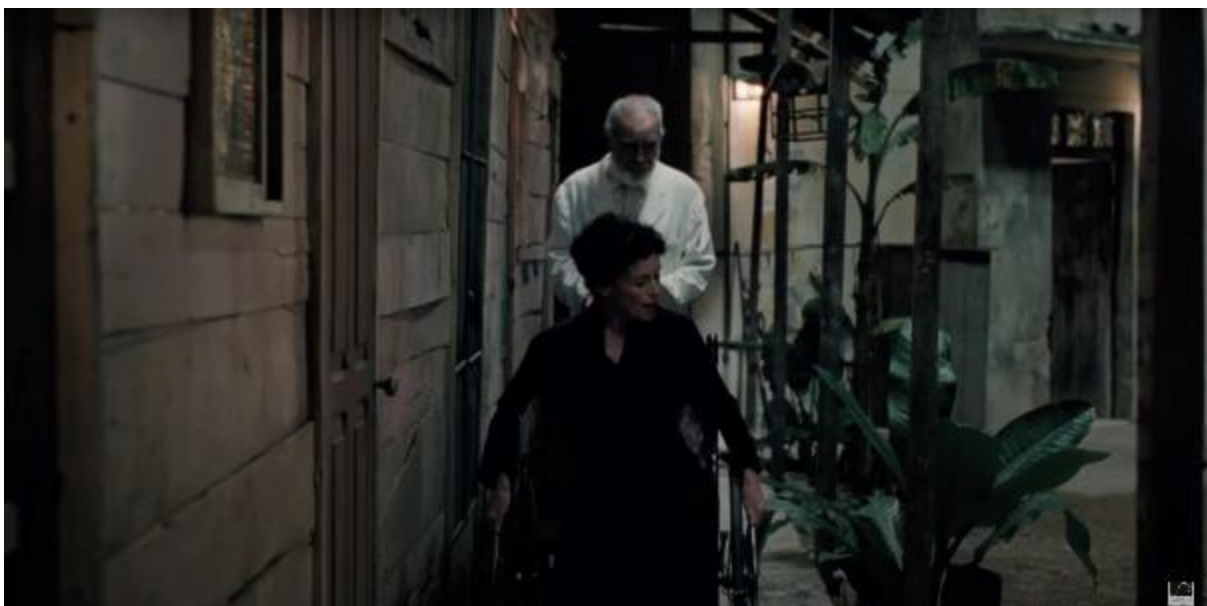
Getting prepared for the meeting The Wise Old Man starts to prepare for the first encounter with Delgadina. He is putting on a white costume in front of a mirror when he is interrupted by Damiana, who judges his excessive effort to dress well. She points out that the costume looks like it was created for another person. The commentary triggers a memory of the Wise Old Man. He remembers the first sexual encounter with Ximena at his middle age, dressing in the same costume. The scene alternates between that memory and the present. Damiana continues to comment on his careful preparations as he remembers when he proposed to Ximena in the past.



The way to the brothel The Wise Old Man is headed to Rosa's place to meet Delgadina. The way is full of memories. He remembers how he lied and rejected Ximena to go directly to the brothel to spend time with Casilda Armenia. Then, the Wise Old Man and the other prostitutes simulate a carnivalesque wedding. The Wise Old Man marries all of them in a single night. In the present, the Wise Old Man crosses paths with some person in the street, who strangely wishes him to have a good time or warns him to pay attention in Rosa's place because it's not the place it used to be.



In Rosa's place The Wise Old Man finally arrives with Rosa, who welcomes him with joy because it has been more than 20 years since they last saw each other. After a brief exchange of words, she introduces the subject of Delgadina and asks him to follow her. On the way to the room, she gives some warnings to the Wise Old Man about meeting the young woman. She tells him that Delgadina was afraid and exhausted, so she gave her a sleep aid. It is notable that the Wise Old Man underestimates Delgadina's job as a seamstress, saying that it is an easy occupation. Finally, she asks him to let the young woman sleep for as long as she needs.



The first night The Wise Old Man and Delgadina meet for the first time. The encounter has place in two moments. In the first one, he finds her sleeping naked in the bed. He just contemplates her for a moment, then take out all his clothes, caresses her a little bit and then falls sleep at her side. In the second moment, Delgadina wakes up and show curiosity for the Wise Old Man. She dresses his clothes and feel his perfume in silence, and then return to bed to sleep a little bit more. Between both parts, the Wise Old Man remembers again the night in the brothel, when they simulated the collective wedding. In this time, the memory has a nostalgic meaning. It shows us the vitality that the Wise Old Man used to have, in contrast to his current state.



Damiana's confrontation After the first night with Delgadina, the Wise Old Man returns to his house. Damiana is cleaning while he writes his memories. Suddenly, he asks her if she has ever fallen in love. The question triggers feelings of nostalgia and pain in her, evident in her facial expressions and voice intonation. As she leaves the room, she reproaches him, stating that this brings her no comfort and that he hurt her in the same way twenty years ago. The Wise Old Man feels guilty, as she leaves the room. He moves to his room where he finds dozens of flowers and a manuscript card by Damiana wishing him enough health and luck to reach 100 years.



A call from Rosa The Wise Old Man returns to write what he expected to be his last column. At that moment, he receives a call from Rosa. She wants to give him feedback from Delgadina about their encounter. Surprisingly, the young girl is disappointed with the Wise Old Man. According to Rosa, she feels that her beauty was rejected. Then Rosa argues that Delgadina could go around telling everybody about the Wise Old Man's impotence, but he answers that it does not matter anymore, and that the girl is now useless. It is notable that the phone conversation is introduced without a phone, a mark of magical realism. Although Rosa appears in a close-up with the telephone in hand, the Wise Old Man is not using one, simulating a conversation in person.



Delgadina follows the Wise Old Man Delgadina crosses paths with the Wise Old Man on his way home. He does not perceive her, or maybe he is not able to recognize her. She takes the opportunity to know him a little better. The focus of the movie shifts to her. Even though the camera still shows him very close, we cannot listen to his conversation with a couple he meets in the street. Delgadina shows herself to be curious about the Wise Old Man's interactions and decides to follow him to his house.



Rosa advocates for Delgadina The Wise Old Man and Rosa have another phone call about Delgadina. Similar to the last time, the phone call unfolds as a face-to-face conversation, adding dynamism to these scenes. The procuress calls to persuade the Wise Old Man to give Delgadina another chance, as she regrets how the previous encounter turned out. He insists that the young woman was "echada a perder" (ruined), but Rosa argues that Delgadina felt unwell the other night due to her work at the fabric, and she was afraid of being a victim of violence. He does not believe Rosa's words and hangs up the phone, shouting. Rosa gives a bracelet to Delgadina.



The military oppression The Wise Old Man goes to the park for a walk, carrying an old cat in a basket. However, he is intercepted by a young military officer at the entrance of the park. They are restricting entry, demanding people to identify themselves. Meanwhile, Delgadina continues to follow him through the streets. She plans to give him the bracelet given by Rosa and waits for the Wise Old Man to exit the park. As he leaves, she crosses paths with him on her bicycle, leaving the bracelet behind as a signal he cannot ignore.



Return to Rosa As planned by Delgadina and Rosa, the bracelet was enough to prompt the Wise Old Man to contact Rosa and request another encounter. He acknowledges that he was wrong to shout at her during their last call. Rosa accepts his apologies and instructs him to come that night. His only condition is that Delgadina must wait for him completely naked. Rosa discusses with him whether he truly wants to miss the pleasure of undressing her himself, but he confirms his desire. Once again, the phone call is acted out as if the characters were in the same room.



The second night Delgadina waits for the Wise Old Man in the same room as the first night, naked, made up, and asleep. On this occasion, she is also wet. He carefully dries her with a towel and speaks softly. When he finishes, he goes to the bathroom to undress himself. In the mirror, he sees the sentence "El tigre no come con los ojos". Confused and thinking that Delgadina wrote that, he falls asleep beside her, as he did the first night. She never wakes up during the night.



A conversation with Delgadina

The Wise Old Man returns home in the middle of a storm. Once in his room, he feels another presence. It's Delgadina, or at least, he imagines that she is there, dressed, made up and taking his books. She asks him why they should meet each other when he is too old. He answers that he is not old, because he has a lot of energy to continue living and spending time with her. Suddenly, she disappears. We see him writing some lines, stating that the encounter was just another miracle of his very first love at ninety years old.



Another phone call with Rosa

We arrive in the middle of the conversation. Rosa is confused because she cannot believe that in two nights, they haven't had sexual relations. The Wise Old Man answers that sex is for those for whom love is not enough. This statement confuses Rosa even more, and she insists that he doesn't really like Delgadina. She tells him that there is another virgin woman, but older, and that the father of this woman wants to exchange her for a house. The Wise Old Man refuses the offer. He only wants the same girl under the same conditions. Rosa accepts.



The third night The Wise Old Man returns to Rosa's place to meet Delgadina for a third night. This time, he brings two gifts for her. The first one, his mother's earrings. They are a family heirloom, used by his grandmother and his great-grandmother. The second one, a painting from someone called "Figurita". He tells her that the artist was someone very loved for everyone in the brothel and the painting is a portrait from a nun, to whom he took out from a convent to marry her. Delgadina continues pretending to be asleep, while the Wise Old Man whispers to her all the story.



The love letters The encounter with Delgadina awakens love in the Wise Old Man. He begins to express these feelings by writing love letters in manuscript form for the newspaper. The director informs him that they never publish manuscripts. However, a colleague steps in and convinces him by saying, "los loquitos mansos se adelantan al porvenir" ("the meek crazies get ahead of the future"). Finally, the letter appears in the newspaper. The scene ends with a glimpse of the fourth night. Delgadina is awake and smiling as she looks at her sleeping partner. We understand that she has read the published love letter.



Lunch with Rosa The Wise Old Man and Rosa are eating at the same table, discussing Delgadina and the old man's feelings. During the conversation, he mentions the name "Delgadina" for the first time. Rosa is surprised because that is not her real name, but he says that he invented the name. Rosa suggests that they should marry, but he refuses the proposal. Additionally, he comments on the message in the mirror. Once again, Rosa is surprised because Delgadina is illiterate. In the middle of the conversation, we see memories of another encounter between the lovers.



The reading in the sewing factory The love letters to Delgadina written by the Wise Old Man become popular in the city. The foreman in the sewing factory is reading one of them to the workers, including Delgadina. A worker asks permission to speak and inquires about the real identity of Delgadina. This intervention sparks a debate among the workers. Some women speak without permission, questioning Delgadina's existence or suggesting that she should live in another city. The foreman becomes angry and yells that they are not allowed to speak without permission. He then asks the worker why she thinks Delgadina does not live in the town. She simply answers that if Delgadina lived there, the Wise Old Man would not write about her. Delgadina remains silent but appears annoyed throughout the exchange.



The life of an old cat Damiana arrives with the cat in a basket while the Wise Old Man is writing. She interrupts him to demand his authorization to euthanize the cat. He becomes angry at the proposal, arguing that it is not reasonable to take the life of an animal simply because it is old. He acknowledges that euthanasia may be necessary for public health or medical reasons, but not just because of old age. The scene intends to draw a parallel between the life of the cat and the life of the Wise Old Man, emphasizing the idea that old age should be respected.



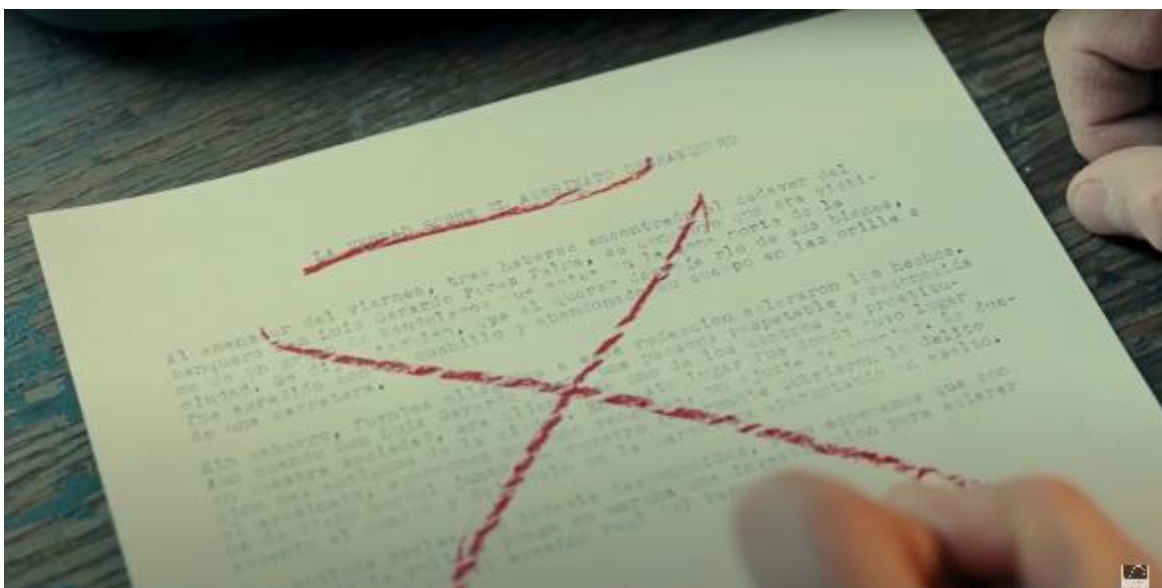
Reading with Delgadina In their fifth encounter, the Wise Old Man person reads a novel to Delgadina. She is fully awake, but she is turning away. The reading was about the bedtime habits of a child. The fragment talks about the brief moment when he wakes up and doesn't know who he is or where he is. Also, he talks about his discomfort at leaving his mother after dinner. The subject of the reading triggers the memory of his mother, which we see in the first scenes of the film. Delgadina reacts a little bit angrily after the fragment. She says that it was Isabel who made the snails cry. The response allows us to understand that the Wise Old Man person has read to her more than once.



A murder in the brothel A phantasmagoric, pale version of the Wise Old Man's mother walks towards the camera. She touches the Wise Old Man's arm, pronouncing in Italian: "Figlio mio, poveretto" (My son, poor thing). The Wise Old Man wakes up. It was Rosa who touched him. She demands his help with a problem at the brothel: a client has been murdered. He follows her to another room where he sees the cadaver of a middle-aged man stabbed in the chest. Despite the Wise Old Man's objections, they dress the body and take him out to a mysterious car. Meanwhile, Delgadina wakes up, removes her makeup, and hides outside to spy on Rosa and the Wise Old Man. Her face expresses anguish and confusion. Rosa advises the Wise Old Man to flee immediately with her, but he only finds his mother's earrings.



The truth about the death of the young banker The next day, the newspaper publishes the news about the murder in the brothel. However, the Wise Old Man tells the director that the information is not accurate and persuades him to write another article with the truth. Then, we see a close-up of the censor's face, who crosses out words in red across the page. This leads us to deduce that the control over the content is not only moral. The scene ends at the funeral of the young banker. The Wise Old Man and the director observe the family crying, reflecting on death and life.



Looking for Delgadina The Wise Old Man returns to Rosa's place, but he finds suspension signs all over the door. A long sequence begins. The character undertakes a desperate search for Delgadina and Rosa. First, he asks people close to the place, then at the newspaper, where he learns about the murder of two young girls, apparently committed by the government. The situation intensifies his desperation. The Wise Old Man follows a similar young girl. Using his cat, he tries to break into Rosa's place, but a voice on the other side of the door denies the existence of anyone named Rosa. Returning home, he witnesses a bicycle accident. Believing that Delgadina was the victim, he rushes to the hospital. Finally, he goes to the sewing factory where Delgadina works, but he cannot recognize her without her makeup. She looks disappointed, but she does not try to contact him.



Rosa returns The Wise Old Man insists in going at Rosa's place. Finally, one night she backs and open a window where both characters have a conversation. The demands explanation for her absences and a new encounter with Delgadina. She asks him to stay calm and to be patience, because it is mandatory to wait until the next opportunity. He insists one more time, telling her that they are partners. She repeats him to wait, because it could be dangerous to organize another night at this moment. She gets exasperated by the Wise Old Man's incisive attitude.



Desperation The conversation with Rosa worsens the Wise Old Man's mental health, leading to increased desperation. He is seen wandering aimlessly around his house, even venturing out onto the terrace in the rain, walking in circles. Delgadina observes him in this state, also standing in the rain. She feels compassion for his condition. The next morning, he receives a phone call and a note inviting him to a new encounter at night.



The fury of the Wise Old Man The Wise Old Man arrives at Rosa's place with gifts, only to find Delgadina dramatically changed. She is awake and adorned with jewels and different makeup. Infuriated by her transformation, he begins to smash things in the room, frightening her. Rosa intervenes, ordering him to leave with her. He accuses Rosa of profiting from selling Delgadina's virginity, but she denies it, explaining that Delgadina was alone and in a dire situation, so she prepared her for him. He refuses to believe her and leaves, insulting both Rosa and Delgadina.



The jewelry store The Wise Old Man tries to sell his mother's earrings to pay the damage caused in Rosa's Place. He goes to the same place where he was with her mother buying the, as he remembers in this moment. However, the jeweler who has a register of every transaction tells him that the emerald is fake. His mother sold it when he was a child. The Wise Old Man decides to conserve the earrings and return to the memory of his mother singing. This time he interrupts her saying "ya soy un hombre viejo". We see how the child Wise Old Man has change for the old one. A brief monologue let us now that he is dying for love, but truly happy.



An encounter with Casilda The scene begins with a long shot of the Wise Old Man on the beach, gazing melancholically at the sea. A woman, Casilda, accompanied by her dog, approaches slowly to the old man. She asks him why he is there, and he responds that he is trying to escape from himself. They then go to Casilda's house and discuss the Wise Old Man's feelings. Casilda is surprised to learn that he is in love and mentions how everyone calls him the "master of love" because of his past experiences in brothels, including with her. She advises him not to lose Delgadina.



Looking for Delgadina Casilda's advice convinces the Wise Old Man to seek forgiveness from Delgadina. He attempts to find her on his own but is unsuccessful. He encounters Casilda again, who urges him to search for Delgadina and to experience making love with genuine affection at least once. Meanwhile, we observe the Wise Old Man crossing paths with Delgadina in the park without noticing her. He pleads with Rosa to arrange a meeting for that same night, but she insists it's "impossible." Several hours later, Rosa calls him back, informing him that his lover is with her and that they can meet immediately.



The last conversation with Rosa The Wise Old Man and Rosa talk before the encounter with Delgadina. She proposes him to do an "apuesta de viejos". Who dies first should give everything to the other. He refuses because he wants that Delgadina gets all after his death. Rosa promises to take care of Delgadina with his money. She expresses that she has no other one, so the young girl will keep everything.



The last night The Wise Old Man walks toward the room where Delgadina awaits him. However, he hesitates for a moment, and she comes to find him. Taking his hands, they enter the room and spend the night together. For the first time, he sees Delgadina's face without makeup.



“Estoy loco de amor” The Wise Old Man returns home and sits at his typewriter as the sunrise arrives. The expression on his face shows undeniable happiness as he walks outside. He yells, "I'm crazy in love." Someone responds, "Not crazy, insane." The joy in his face starts to fade as he replies to the voice, "Perhaps, but today the world is much better." The film ends with silence, the melancholic expression of the Wise Old Man, and the landscape.

