

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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Garden of Delights / Jardín de las delicias (1970)

Carlos Saura (1932-2023)

OVERVIEW

Auteur Carlos Saura was arguably the most lauded and well-known director in Spain in the second half of the twentieth century. Born in Huesca, Aragon in 1932, Saura grew up in the stark post civil-war landscape. From an early age, he experimented with photography, painting, and music, and all three artforms informed the themes and visual frames in his films. For this reason, many of his early films (most notably *Golfos* of 1962 and *La Caza* of 1966) depict the poverty and violence of both the city and the country in the mid-twentieth century. Saura's middle period was characterized by satires of the bourgeoisie and a dissection of the Spanish family unit. Saura married three different women and had a long-term relationship with his favorite actress and muse, Geraldine Chaplin. All four relationships yielded children: one daughter, and six sons. In the 1980s and 1990s, Saura became fascinated with various music and dance styles and used his documentary eye to capture the process of performance with music. His later period includes films about tango from Argentina, fados from Portugal, and flamenco and theater from Andalucía (southern Spain). Saura died in 2023, right before he was set to receive the lifetime achievement award at the Goya Awards.

Film *Garden of Delights* (1970) is a satirical drama set in Madrid in the 1960s. The plot involves a wounded businessman named Antonio Cano, who recuperates in the eponymous garden. Due to his injuries, Antonio has memory loss and must string together fragmented memories from his life, which allows for a clever use of flashbacks and analepsis. In addition, many of the “memory” sequences are in actuality dreams or alternative realities, which further blurs the line between reality and fiction.

Background Saura wrote *Garden of Delights* with Rafael Azcona, who would collaborate with the director multiple times throughout the 1970s and 80s. As with many of his films, Saura employs his knowledge and love of art to create striking *mise en scene* throughout the film, although the most obvious reference is to the famous Renaissance painting *Garden of Earthly Delights* (circa 1505) by Hieronymus Bosch. The painting serves to evoke the images of heaven and hell that Bosch inserted into his highly complex triptych. With this seemingly benign premise, Saura and Azcona subtly criticize the Francoist dictatorship and allude to recent Spanish history—in particular, the Spanish Civil War. Because of the inferred critique of Franco's regime, many scenes were subjected to government censorship and editing. Even with these obstacles, the film garnered rave reviews and was featured in the London Film Festival.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

<i>Antonio Cano</i>	businessman wounded in an accident
<i>Luchy</i>	Antonio's exasperated wife
<i>Don Pedro</i>	Antonio's father who acts as psychiatrist
<i>Nicole</i>	Antonio's mistress who was in the car accident
<i>Tony</i>	Antonio and Luchy's rebellious son
<i>Julia</i>	Antonio and Luchy's daughter
<i>The Nurse</i>	The red-headed woman who assists Antonio
<i>The Mother</i>	The pretty actress who plays Antonio's younger mother
<i>The Aunt</i>	The brunette in white whom Antonio “remembers”

SYNOPSIS

Antonio Cano, a fierce businessman in the construction business, amasses a fortune in the 1940s and 50s. Then, he gets in a near-death car accident. The result is that he has very limited motility and cognitive function: he stays seated in a wheel chair most of the time, and he can only say a few words. Because he was the CEO of the business, Antonio was the only person who knew where the company money was—and the codes and passwords to the bank accounts and safes.

As a result, his family engages in therapy and reenactments in order to stimulate Antonio's memory. Pedro, Antonio's father and the former CEO, decides to recreate several traumatic memories from his son's childhood, including the death of his young mother in the 1930s. Pedro also occasionally creates partially improvised scenes to remind Antonio of the joy in his life, including hunting with his friends and sex with his mistress, Nicole. For the most part, their efforts fail, and no one finds the company money.

In addition to the therapy and reenactment scenes, Antonio also experiences his own dreams, fantasies, and memories. Sometimes they are pleasant, such as when he remembers his aunt's tenderness when he was sick; sometimes they are nightmarish, such as when he imagines that medieval knights are chasing him. Antonio's visions are played out in a similar fashion to the reenactments, which further confuses the viewer as to what is fantasy, what is memory, and what is reality.

In the end, Antonio recovers slightly but not enough to run the business again. He remains with his family but is declared incompetent by the machinist board. The last scene is a tableau in which Antonio and his whole family sit in wheel chairs in the garden.

SCENES

Machines and Make-Up Tips As the credits roll, there is a long shot of a big machinist warehouse. The camera pans across the huge workshop that is filled with multiple machines, including wood cutters and hanging metal orbs. There is a sound of buzzing as if some is maneuvering an electric saw. There is a sudden cut to an elegant woman putting on her makeup in front of a curio with three mirrors. We see the reflection of a maid in the mirror as the woman primps, then a man in a suit standing behind her. The older man expresses his approval but suggests that the woman put on more lipstick and lipliner. Another woman enters and goes over to the seated woman. She helps the seated woman style her hair while the old man further suggests that the seated woman use a pin to separate her eyelashes, which she does.



Antonio Remembers His Parents Punishing Him Suddenly, there is a loud screeching sound from outside. The seated woman, who is still separating her eyelashes, is startled. Several men enter with a huge hog on a leash. There is an abrupt cut to a close-up of a man's face. The face seems to float towards the camera and stops right in front of the scene of the elegant woman putting on her make-up. She and another man turn to face the floating head, and we see an empty red bedroom with one dresser, a lamp sconce, and a table with a record player on top—but no other furniture. The couple proceeds to lament, very melodramatically, that their son has not “gotten better.” The man yells at his son and describes his punishment—that he will have to sleep with the hogs in the kitchen. As the “father” gesticulates angrily, we see the full figure of the son, an adult Antonio Cano, sitting in a wheel chair.



Antonio's Relatives Enact His Treatment Three women and two men approach Antonio from behind and push his wheel chair towards a closed door. One of the men, the one who was playing Antonio's father (who turns out to be Antonio's actual father, Don Pedro), whispers in Antonio's right ear that he is still five years old and that the pigs will eat his hands. Antonio yells “no!”, and Pedro tells the others that the experiment is working. Together, they push him into a dark room, shut the door, and say that Antonio must spend the night there. One of Antonio's daughters protests that this exercise is too cruel, but Pedro retorts that Antonio must pass through the nightmares of his subconscious in order to get better—and that symbolism is important. One woman asks if they should leave him until “the pigs eat him”. The doctor waits a few seconds, then asks the nurse to bring him out of the dark room. Antonio



appears catatonic. The women caress his face and try to assure him that there was no pig—and it was all a joke. Pedro calls over the woman playing Antonio's mother. She scolds him and tells him that that is what happens to naughty boys, but she forgives him. The woman playing his mother traces the cross on Antonio's forehead.

Getting Antonio Ready for Bed Two maids and Antonio's nurse prepare his bed. They assist him in washing his face. They remove the arm rests of his wheel chair and lift him into the bed. The maids tuck him in to his covers and bedspread.

Antonio Remembers His Aunt and Has a Semi-Incestuous Fantasy There is a slow pan around a sky blue and white bedroom that starts with a close-up of a window with billowing white curtains. We see a blue love seat, black and white photos on the wall, and Antonio lying in a different bed. An old song plays (one of Imperio Argentina's hits from the 1930s). A beautiful young woman in a white gown enters the room and approaches the bed. She leans over to check on Antonio, and we see that she has the short, wavy hairstyle of the 1930s. The woman touches his face and tells him tenderly that they will celebrate his eleventh birthday as soon as he is feeling better. She reports that he does not have a fever and asked how he slept. Antonio looks at her lovingly and answers: "Fine, Auntie." She goes to the night table to give him medicine. He slides over and props himself up to be closer to his aunt. She feeds him a spoonful of cough syrup and dabs his mouth. When Antonio asks after his mother, his aunt replies that she spent the whole night watching him and is sleeping. The aunt then promises to take long walks with him and take him to the movies his mom won't let him see. Suddenly, she kisses him on the mouth passionately for several seconds.



Garden Writing Lesson and Runaway Wheel Chair Antonio sits on the bleachers and watches a doubles tennis match. When a ball hits the fence right in front of his face, one of the players runs over and notices Antonio's blank expression. He taps on the fence as if to wake Antonio up. His daughter runs over and calls out "Nurse!" There is a cut to a wide aerial shot of the nurse pushing Antonio's wheelchair across a long, green field. When they get close to the house, the nurse places a tray on Antonio's lap. Antonio gazes longingly at the pool man cleaning the pool several yards away. The nurse tells Antonio to pay attention so that she can teach him how to write. She places a paper with his signature on the tray and repeats "Antonio" slowly. She places a pen in his right hand and tells him to move his fingers. He painstakingly writes each letter of his name, but quickly gets distracted and looks up at the sky. The nurse chides him for not concentrating, but Antonio keeps gazing at the pool man. Antonio suddenly sees himself speeding towards the pool in a runaway wheelchair that he cannot control. There is a close up on his bloody fingers, then a wide shot of him crashing into the pool and floating amongst the leaves.



Milkshake With a Side of Boob The nurse pushes Antonio towards the house. One of the maids places a smoothie on Antonio's tray and urges him to drink it. When he says no, the maid warns him that she will get angry. Instead, the maid walks in front of Antonio, opens up her uniform, and takes out her left breast. Antonio sips the straw in the smoothie while looking at the breast (almost as if he were a baby suckling). Meanwhile, the chauffeur pulls up and Pedro gets out. He greets Antonio and places a big stack of geography books on his tray. Pedro reports that the books include a history of great inventions and an atlas. He reminds Antonio that he wanted to travel and see the world as a young boy. The psychiatrist takes out bills from his wallet and places them next to a map of Switzerland in the atlas. He points back and forth, repeating, "money, Switzerland" multiple times. Pedro reminds Antonio of millions in a secret account, and he asks him to name the bank. Antonio continues to sip his milkshake and does not respond. Pedro laments that Antonio did not trust anyone else with details about his fortune.



Mass at Church There is a red altar with vases on it. We hear young boys singing and see a church nave with several boys in the congregation. One boy with a white sailor suit sits in front, and a boy's chorus sings in red robes while an elder plays the organ. A priest stands before the boys and opens up his Bible. The adult Antonio sits in a red armchair behind the priest (in what should be the apse but instead has bookshelves). The priest reads a passage about branches bearing fruit as a metaphor for the bad tree producing bad fruit. He speaks directly to the boy in the sailor suit, who is the young Antonio.

He asserts that only the tree with strong roots can resist the storms of life. As the priest reads, the camera pans across the congregation, where the actress playing Antonio's young mother and other relatives sit. Pedro, also in the congregation, joins the adult Antonio on the altar to explain that he is remembering his first communion on April 14, 1931.

The Birth of the Second Republic: April 14, 1931 Pedro goes on to describe how the ceremony was interrupted by the organist playing disruptive chords, followed by a group of villagers storming inside the church. They carry red, yellow and blue flags, a sign of the Republicans who attempted to foment a socialist Republic before the Spanish Civil War. The boys chorus tries to sing over the Republican protestors, and Antonio's family gets into a brawl with the protestors in the nave. Adult Antonio becomes increasingly agitated and shouts "Silence!" Antonio's beautiful aunt walks into the church and passes his other relatives. Antonio shouts "They took the saints!" Pedro urges him to remember that specific day, April 14, when the Second Republic was born. Loud sirens and bombs are heard. Antonio shouts: "The Reds! War! '36!," which indicates that he is remembering the beginning of the civil war a few years later. Antonio stands up and shouts over the deafening sound of war planes.



Antonio's Daughter Visits Him in the Garden Antonio sits in the garden at an outdoor table. He attempts to write with both hands. His daughter shows up and sits beside him. She prompts him to touch his mouth with his right hand. He starts to raise his left hand instead, but she insists that he use his right hand. He manages to raise his right hand several inches. His daughter cheers him on but gets up to leave. As she walks away, Antonio uses his left hand to draw concentric circles on the paper. He then listens to the birds chirping and stares fixedly at leaves on the trees.

Medieval Forest Fantasy As Antonio contemplates the leaves on the trees, he spots a knight in armor peaking through the forest. Suddenly, there are three knights charging towards him carrying their jousting sticks. Antonio jumps up, startled, and turns away. He enters a room in the house and closes the door as the galloping noise fades away. He enters a cozy living room with a fire burning in the fireplace, then continues down the hall towards a bedroom.



Antonio's Wife is at Her Wit's End When he opens another door, he sees his wife sitting at a dresser. She is obsessively brushing and styling her hair. As he walks towards her, she complains that the kids are driving her crazy and that they are disrespectful. Julia, their daughter, has left and is acting like a moody teenager, and their son won't communicate and stays shut up in his room all day. She continues to describe his behavior and says that after days of silence and a smack in the face, their son proclaimed: "you can burn me, but you will end up with a labyrinth of fire." She looks at Antonio to see his reaction, and she is frustrated when he appears not to have understood the story. She asks whether he finished his exercises, and Antonio nods. She asks whether he knows that she is his wife, Luchy. She then guides him towards a painting depicting the knights that he had imagined earlier. Luchy moves the painting to reveal a safe. She places Antonio's hand on the dial and begs him to remember the combination. He walks away, and Luchy sighs with disappointment.

Antonio Tries to Communicate with His Son After listening to his wife's venting, Antonio continues to wander around the house and mutters "leave." He wanders into the kitchen, when a cook is holding a large dead hare and smacking it across the face. Frightened, Antonio returns back down the hall and enters his son's bedroom. Indian sitar music plays as Antonio's son lies in bed and drinks a cappuccino. He is dressed in a white t-shirt with a silver necklace, and we see that he is eating breakfast in bed. Antonio repeats "leave," and his son asks him where he wants to go. His son invites him to come in, close the door, and sit down. His son offers Antonio a bite of his toast and prompts him to open his mouth. He asks Antonio if he wants to go see his wife or go out into the garden, but Antonio shakes his head no. The son gets out of bed and assumes a hostile, lecturing tone. He starts shouting that Antonio is a good for nothing who won't work or study, and he would have thrown Antonio out if it weren't for his mother. We realize that Antonio's son has become his father in a memory of a conflict between them. Antonio's son, as his father, continues shouting and throwing books off of the shelf in a fit of violence. He grabs Antonio by the



collar and throws him out of the room, shouting “I’ve had it with you!” He goes on to say that he doesn’t care if Antonio ends up in the streets or the hospital.

Antonio Explores His Machinist Workshop Antonio walks into the adjoining workshop with rows of work tables and machines. We recognize some of the metal parts from the opening shots of the film. Antonio passes the metal orb that appears to be a bomb, then looks up at the roof—which has skylights. There is an extended pan of the roof, then an aerial shot of the whole warehouse, including two portraits hanging on the wall near the entrance.



Don Pedro Stages a Mistress Reenactment Antonio walks towards his patio table in the garden. As he sits down, his right arm lies limp and his left arm is swinging. He starts to write his signature with his right hand. Later that night, Antonio is lying in bed and murmuring his name. A beautiful young brunette approaches his bed and introduces herself as Nicole. She explains that she could not leave work right after the accident, but she was worried about him. Nicole kisses and caresses him, and even pulls up her skirt so that Antonio can feel her thigh. The camera pulls back, and we see the family and Don Pedro watching the scene intently. Luchy bristles at the sexual overtones, but Tony whistles in admiration at Nicole’s shapely legs. Nicole continues to fawn over Antonio and invite him to her house “again.” Luchy gets increasingly hurt and offended and demands that Don Pedro put an end to the exercise. Antonio starts to kiss Nicole back and even murmurs her name. Tony continues to enjoy the performance. Luchy gets up, slaps Tony hard, and runs out of the room. Don Pedro says that her exit is for the best. Nicole asks Antonio if he could write her a check to help her out, but her overture is interrupted by a furious Luchy, who storms in and starts physically attacking Nicole. Don Pedro sighs at the near miss.



Civil War Reenactment with Shields Back in the garden, there are two long rows of colored shields facing each other. One row is yellow with a yellow flag (likely referencing the Nationalists under Franco), and the other is red (likely referencing the socialist Republicans). As the rows of shields move towards one another, we see that figures are crouched behind each shield. The two rows stop close to each other, and we see that the “soldiers” are young, pre-pubescent boys. They crouch down and throw rocks at each other. Some boys fall down as casualties with blood running down their temples; others engage in hand-to-hand combat while a dramatic chorus sings a disturbing battle song from Eisenstein’s film *Alexander Nevsky* (about a Russian warrior during the Renaissance). Adult Antonio watches the battle from the sidelines. He sits in a red armchair similar to the one featured in his memory of his first communion.

Bird Hunting Simulation As Antonio sits in his red armchair outside, three of his old friends approach with rifles and two hunting dogs. Antonio pets one of the dogs with his left hand. One of the friends shows him his old rifle and places it in his hands. The friend positions his right hand on the trigger. Antonio manages to say “hunt.” Another friend releases a bird so that Antonio can shoot at it. Antonio manages to pull the trigger several times but cannot aim. Another friend shoots the bird and pretends that Antonio hit the target. When the dogs bring back the dead bird, Antonio shouts “me!” excitedly. Don Pedro approaches to get a report on this exercise. While the friends chat with the psychiatrist, Antonio looks at the bird and realizes that it is a decoy.



The Business Ambitions of Young Antonio Adult Antonio drives to a quarry in a sleek vintage car. When he gets out of the vehicle, we see that he is walking differently and using both arms, which indicates that this is a flashback pre-accident. He climbs the stairs towards the central office, where Don Pedro is talking on the phone. Antonio kisses his father and waits for the conversation to end. Pedro and his secretary Jiménez explain that Antonio has been promoted to head engineer and that Pedro has arranged for him to study in the states for three months. Antonio asks Jiménez to leave. He explains to his father that he does not want to study abroad, but rather expand the factory production. Antonio lays out an ambitious plan in which the factory moves from a small family business to a national production machine; also, he



proclaims that he wants the business not only to make the goods, but to sell them rather than going through a third party. Pedro listens but also expresses some skepticism.

Civil War Footage and Mother's Death Antonio sits in his red armchair, but this time in a darkened theater. Black and white footage of Nationalist troops marching plays on the screen while a woman recites poetic verses about the glory and majesty of heroism in war. Suddenly, Don Pedro appears in full uniform in front of the screen. He shouts excitedly, "We won!" and goes to embrace Antonio in his seat. Pedro then tells Antonio that his mother is dying and he must go to her. Antonio points to the screen and says "Movie." Pedro guides his son towards a lobby area where there is a diorama of a winter, snow-covered mountains. He reminds him that the "tragedy" occurred at Christmastime when Antonio was 12. Pedro tells Antonio to look out at the garden. We see a young woman in a 40s style purple dress running towards the house; then, she collapses on a round stone sculpture just outside. Pedro guides Antonio out to look at his dead mother, who remains splayed out on top of the round stone slab. We see that the same actress is playing Antonio's mother as in the first "pig" reenactment. Antonio manages to say that the woman is not his mother despite Pedro's performance of grief. Pedro embraces him and proclaims that Antonio is getting better.



Antonio Looks at Old Photos of the Factory The nurse pushes Antonio in his wheelchair in front of a series of blown-up photos, many of which are family portraits and candid shots. Photos 6 and 7 contain different shots of the family factory, although the first also contains a battle scene in front of the factory, where a soldier on horseback (in a Napoleon-style hat) is riding down an enemy combatant. The implication is that the factory was first built around the time of the War of Independence. Pedro explains that Antonio's grandfather was gifted part of the first factory by a nobleman, then gradually became the sole owner. The nurse chides Antonio for not paying attention and for not studying the photos. Pedro goes on to explain the recent history of the factory—specifically, how Antonio took advantage of the post-war vacuum in the 1940s to greatly expand production. Pedro exhorts Antonio to look at the press that they built after the war, but Antonio stares into space. The nurse bends over and chides him fiercely while looking him straight in the eye. Pedro plays a recording of a rousing speech that Antonio gave to the press in which he encouraged each worker to value his own contributions to the state. Antonio starts to remember the specific phrases of the speech, and he recites them in tandem with the recording.

Pedro Tries to Insert Antonio Back in the Business Luchy and the nurse help Antonio get dressed in a suit. He is able to stand by himself and speak more easily, but he becomes easily agitated when the nurse does not understand which tie he wants. Antonio buttons his own jacket with both hands, although he still favors his left side. Pedro enters, and all four look at Antonio in a floor-length mirror. Pedro and Antonio enter the boardroom with several smoking colleagues. Antonio starts to give a report on expenses and prices, but he quickly loses his place and can't continue. Another associate completes the sentence and tells the others that Antonio is merely reciting an old speech. Pedro tries to prompt Antonio, but Antonio loses the thread completely and can only say "My head." One of the associates suggests that Pedro declare Antonio legally incompetent, but Pedro resists, saying "He was the one who built up this company." The associates try to comfort Pedro while also insisting that they must save the company.



Romantic Stroll Through the Forest Luchy and Antonio walk around a fountain in the middle of the forest. Luchy describes her feelings about their marriage—that although she respected Antonio's work ethic and appreciated the comfort of wealth, she always wished to spend more time with him as a companion. Luchy goes on to lament that the kids gave her purpose, but now they are ungrateful and egotistical teenagers. She consoles herself by saying that it is good to feel needed, and taking care of Antonio gives her a purpose. Antonio starts to speak in stutters and says "water." Luchy infers that Antonio is referencing the nearby river. She gets excited when she realizes that Antonio is remembering how they would take a boat out on the river when they were courting. There is a cut to the two of them in a white boat on the river, with Luchy as the rower. Antonio keeps saying "An American tragedy." Suddenly, Antonio shakes the boat violently. Luchy laughs but tells him to stop. Antonio then takes one of the paddles and pushes it into Luchy's chest. Luchy protests but keeps laughing even though Antonio's expression remains angry and violent.



Antonio “Remembers” the Car Accident

In the garden, there are two cars which have obviously just been in a head-on collision. As the camera closes in on the scene, we see a dead man with a bloody face lying on the field next to his car. We then see a bloody Antonio sitting behind the wheel, but he moves his head just enough that we know he is still alive. Nicole, in a white dress, lies on the passenger side. There is a close up of a bloody gash on her right thigh. Antonio watches himself from afar in the wheel chair. Both Antonios (the one watching in the wheel chair and the wounded Antonio in the car) say: “Do what you want with my body, but don’t touch my head,” which is precisely what Francoist industrialist Juan March cried out when he was in a car accident. Antonio in the wheel chair uses his left hand to lift his right, then taps his fingers on the tray in front of him as if he were playing scales on the piano.



Everyone in Wheel Chairs

Antonio sits in his wheel chair in the middle of the field and starts listing animals. His entire family, also sitting in wheel chairs, whiz behind him one by one, starting with Pedro and Luchy. There is a sudden cut to another Antonio running across the garden towards a circular stone slab, in a similar fashion to the actress playing his mother right before her death. He looks across the field at himself and the others moving in a sort of wheel chair ballet. The relatives stare ahead with blank expressions, and no one looks at each other, which suggests that they are all at least partially paralyzed. Then, all five characters, still in wheel chairs, form a tableau with Antonio in the center of the garden. Antonio faces forward and stares directly into the camera, whereas the others sit at various angles.



CHARACTER ANALYSIS

ANTONIO (both pre- and post-accident)

Antonio is an accomplished businessman who garnered a fortune by monopolizing the machinist market after the Spanish Civil War. For this reason, he is very ambitious and lustful. When he gets in a near-death car crash, Antonio’s motility and cognitive function are highly damaged, which leads to his frustration and feelings of melancholy.

Ambitious Before the accident, Antonio is determined to conquer the machinist market by expanding the business and earning a fortune. Although Antonio appears indifferent to his therapy and interactions with his family, he still has moments of determination: trying to hit the bird with his rifle, trying to memorize and recite his old speeches, and trying to kill his wife on the boat ride. It is obvious that Antonio would like to have his old life back, even though he does not fully remember what his old life entailed.

Lustful Before the accident, Antonio was having a torrid affair with Nicole. After the accident, Antonio’s libido continues to “come up” through the course of his therapy and recovery. The maids expose themselves to him in order to get Antonio to obey, and Pedro brings in Nicole in order to incite his son’s desire. Antonio even has sexual thoughts in his dreams, where he is kissing his aunt as if she were a lover.

Melancholy Post-accident Antonio appears to be frustrated and depressed by his lack of competence and freedom. He acts like a bratty child when the nurse and his relatives try to incite his memory or work on his exercises. He often stares into space, which prompts the nurse to yell at him to pay attention. When Antonio starts to recover some speech and memory, he begins to realize that he still cannot resume his old life, which causes him to lash out at Luchy and the nurse.

DON PEDRO

Don Pedro is Antonio’s father and fellow owner and CEO of the machinist factory. He also acts as the leader of Antonio’s treatment. While Pedro sincerely cares for his son, he is also driven by greed in that he wants to recover the family fortune.

Clever Don Pedro devises several clever exercises and reenactments in order to provoke Antonio’s memory. He instinctually realizes that moments of trauma in Antonio’s childhood may help him shake off

the brain fog, just as moments of adult joy could also stimulate his son's memory. Even though he is not a doctor or psychiatrist, Pedro designs a therapy program for his son.

Caring Rather than being a cold, indifferent businessman, Pedro shows himself to be a kind and caring father. Before the accident, Pedro tries to give Antonio promotions and the opportunity to study in the U.S. He also listens with an open mind when Antonio suggests an overhaul of the business. Later, Pedro treats his son with patience and praises him when he accomplishes small tasks in his therapy.

Greedy Although Pedro does try to "cure" Antonio, his ultimate motivation for the therapy sessions is to find the company money. When Pedro brings Antonio an atlas and travel book, we quickly learn that it is only so that Pedro can show Antonio a map of Switzerland—and find the missing Swiss bank account.

THE NURSE

Even though she does not have a name, the Nurse is a constant character throughout the film. She is Antonio's principal companion and therapist, and she acts as a stand-in mother during his recuperation. She serves Antonio and the family faithfully but with a firm hand.

Stern The Nurse becomes the primary disciplinarian within the family dynamic. She tries to maintain a routine for Antonio's therapy, and she scolds him when he does not pay attention. When Antonio tries to write with his left hand, she demands that he do his exercises with his right hand instead.

Faithful The Nurse remains at Antonio's side throughout the film. She is the one who pushed him around the garden and leads him in his physical exercises. When Antonio is able to stand and walk on his own, she remains his assistant and helps him get dressed (even though he is verbally abusive to her).

THEMES

SOCIETY

Religion

At first glance, the social themes in the film seem to be centered on 20th-century Spanish history and the post-war culture of the upper class rather than on religion. The only overtly religious scene is that of the reenactment of Antonio's first communion, which quickly turns from a ceremony in a church to a political protest. Nonetheless, Saura and Azcona provide subtle references to the Catholic tradition in general and the Church's alliance with Franco's dictatorship after the Spanish Civil War. Both Pedro and Antonio are believers in the sense of Catholic doctrine and the Nationalist cause. Moreover, the title *Garden of Delights* refers to the famous Renaissance triptych entitled the *Garden of Earthly Delights*. The interior panels portray the Garden of Eden, humans enjoying various delights and activities, and hell, while the outside panels portray the creation of earth. The "delights" likely refer to humanity's tendency to indulge in the seven deadly sins and defy the Ten Commandments. The Cano family certainly sins in many ways, including their propensity for greed (as indicated by their obsession with finding the company money), their attempts to avoid work (sloth), and lust (as incarnated by Antonio both before and after the accident). Antonio himself breaks or attempts to break several commandments, including adultery and even murder when he attempts to kill Luchy on the boat. Julia and Tony fail to honor their parents and seem to avoid getting jobs. In connection with the family's sins, there are also several references to hell: the panel depicting hell on the triptych, the raging fire in the living room, and Tony's threat to his mother that she will provoke a labyrinth of fire. Even after his accident, Antonio seems to flirt with hell in that he refuses to do exercises with his right hand and uses his left hand and arm as the dominant side (which in Catholic doctrine indicates alignment with the devil). As punishment for their sins, the characters must cope with a loss of fortune and power.

Illustrative Moment: The Priest Describes the Tree of Knowledge

A priest stands before the boys and opens up his *Bible*. The adult Antonio sits in a red armchair behind the priest (in what should be the apse but instead has bookshelves). The priest reads a passage about branches bearing fruit as a metaphor for the bad tree producing bad fruit. He speaks directly to the boy in the



sailor suit, who is the young Antonio. He asserts that only the tree with strong roots can resist the storms of life. As the priest reads, the camera pans across the congregation, where Antonio's young mother and other relatives sit. The priest is referencing the tree of knowledge and Eve's apple in his reading, and he connects the concept of original sin to young Antonio's life. This metaphor also evokes the left interior panel of Bosch's triptych in which he depicts Adam and Eve before the fall.

Cultural and Textual References

Along with the overt references to Bosch's paintings and *The Bible*, Saura and Azcona allude to everything from current events to famous Golden Age plays. For his part, film critic Marvin D'Lugo emphasizes how the premise of the film as a whole—a rich and powerful businessman who must confront his life of complicity and disability, and who does not understand the difference between reality and fantasy—really borrows from three well-known sources. The first is a direct reference to a Spanish businessman who died in a car wreck—industrialist Juan March. Not only did March ally with Franco in the post-war years, he also was reported to have uttered the words “do what you want with my body, but don't touch my head.” The second is an homage to Calderon de la Barca's famous Baroque play, *Life is a Dream*, in which the prince Segismundo is imprisoned and cannot perceive which version of his life is real. The third reference is to Orson Welles's film *Citizen Kane*, which explores the rise and fall of a powerful and corrupt media titan. D'Lugo suggests that Kane's yearning for boyhood innocence, as symbolized by the sled named Rosebud, is similar to Antonio revisiting the innocence of his own past. D'Lugo also sees moments that may allude to other films, such as the romantic boat ride in *A Place in the Sun* or seaside melodramas of the Franco period. I would add that many of the fantasy and therapy reenactment scenes were inspired at least partially by Buñuel's satirical and absurdist films of the 1960s, including the make-up and primping scenes in *Diary of a Chambermaid* (1964), macho hunting in *Diary* and also *Age of Gold* (1930), and the convalescence scenes with Pierre trapped in the wheel chair in *Belle de Jour* (1967). In addition, the disorienting and achronological style of *Garden* mirrors Buñuel's avant-garde style in which there is a lack of a logical plot or timeline, a tendency that Buñuel would employ overtly in his absurdist satires of the 1970s. For those viewers who recognize the musical references, Saura plays Imperio Argentina's songs from the 1930s, as well as the score from Eisenstein's film *Alexander Nevsky*. Argentina's songs evoke the nostalgia of the pre-war musicals that the main movie studio in Madrid, CIFESA, produced in the 1930s and 1940s, and *Alexander Nevsky* references the story of a late medieval warrior king in Russia.

Illustrative Moment: Visual and Thematic Homages in the Hunting Scene

As Antonio sits in his red armchair outside, three of his old friends approach with rifles and two hunting dogs. Antonio pets one of the dogs with his left hand. One of the friends shows him his old rifle and places it in his hands. The friend positions his right hand on the trigger. Antonio manages to say “hunt.” Another friend releases a bird so that Antonio can shoot at it. Antonio manages to pull the trigger several times but cannot aim. Another friend shoots the bird and pretends that Antonio hit the target. When the dogs bring back the dead bird, Antonio shouts “me!” excitedly. Don Pedro approaches to get a report on this exercise. While the friends chat with Pedro, Antonio looks at the bird and realizes that it is fake. The implication is that hunting was Antonio's favorite pastime before the accident, which indicates a tendency toward virility and violence. The emphasis on the rifle itself as a phallus evokes multiple scenes from Buñuel's oeuvre, and Antonio's realization that the friends have tricked him into believing a false reality does suggest an homage to *Life is a Dream*. In addition, Saura revisits his own trope of hunting as a metaphor for war crimes and government oppression in Spain (seen in his early film *The Hunt* from 1965 and also in the western *Weeping for the Bandit* from 1967).



Literal and Figurative Disability

Antonio's physical and mental state throughout the film varies, but it is clear that the protagonist must cope with both physical and mental impairment after the accident. In some ways, Antonio's disability allows him to escape into an oedipal state in which he can fantasize and explore the desires of his Id (such as “suckling” on the maid's breast, engaging in incestuous foreplay with his aunt, and babbling with one or two-word phrases). He also exists in a child-like state of rebellion and acts out like a bratty child. Several literary and film critics have analyzed Antonio's physical and mental disability as a metaphor for

the weakened Spanish state during Franco's dictatorship. Franco had isolated Spain from the rest of Europe and was experiencing economic stagnation and recession in the 1960s. Moreover, Franco himself was in poor health and possibly incapacitated in the last years of his dictatorship. In this interpretation, Antonio's disabled state is a metonym for all Spaniards in the 1960s. Other critics suggest that Antonio's disability forges a path for an alternative portrayal of masculinity and corporality. In his pre-accident state, Antonio incarnates the macho businessmen who dominate the world. In his post-accident state, he loses the traditional sense of power but can develop better relationships with his father, wife, and kids. Like Spain in the 1970s and 80s, he is "transitioning" to a new way of seeing the world and his place in it. This concept of disability as an opportunity to see the world differently is supported by the point of view of the camera for most of the film. We see the world either through Antonio's memories, nightmares, or fantasies, or through his watching the reenactments that his family stages for him.

Illustrative Moment: Everyone in a Wheel Chair

Antonio looks across the field at himself and the others moving in a sort of wheel chair ballet. The relatives stare ahead with blank expressions, and no one looks at each other, which suggests that they are all at least partially paralyzed. Then, all five characters, still in wheel chairs, form a tableau with Antonio in the center of the garden. Antonio faces forward and stares directly into the camera, whereas the others sit at various angles. This conclusion could be interpreted as Antonio's revenge fantasy and his wish that others could experience his trapped state. In this interpretation, Antonio is directing the scene and therefore has agency. Conversely, this ending could represent the universal helplessness of a dictatorship hell. Everyone is figuratively paralyzed within the oppressive and stagnated Spanish state, which conveniently looks similar to Bosch's conception of hell in his triptych.



POLITICS

Conflict (Spanish Civil War)

Throughout the film, Saura and Azcona explicitly and implicitly allude to the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) and its aftermath. The writers suggest that while the three years of actual battle were terrible and violent, the central conflict between the right-wing Nationalists and the left-wing Republicans remains a gaping wound in the Spanish consciousness. Moreover, Franco's dictatorship only served to rub salt in the wound, as he executed many of the Republicans in the first years after the war and continued to suppress dissent until his death in 1975. The overt references to the Spanish Civil War occur three times: first, in the reenactment of Antonio's first communion, when the Republicans storm the church; second, when Antonio imagines the battle with young boys carrying red and yellow shields; and third, the scene where Antonio is watching film footage of Nationalist troops in battle in a dark cinema. These moments of overt conflict tell us that Pedro and Antonio were on the Nationalist side and allied with Franco's government after the conflict ended. In fact, pre-accident Antonio openly suggests to his father that they take advantage of the post-war vacuum to grow the business. Ironically, post-accident Antonio suffers the negative consequences of Franco's dictatorship—namely, imprisonment, paralysis (helplessness), and physical and psychological torture. In the very first scene, in fact, Pedro throws Antonio into the dark room with a hog and tells the other relatives that "symbolism is important." Although Pedro couches the exercise as tough love therapy, it is really a form of torture, propaganda, and gaslighting. In this sense, Antonio's successes and traumas reflect the Spanish experience after a violent war and in the midst of an oppressive dictatorship.

Illustrative Moment: Young Boys Die in Battle

Back in the garden, there are two long rows of colored shields facing each other. One row is yellow with a yellow flag (likely referencing the Nationalists under Franco), and the other is red (likely referencing the socialist Republicans). As the rows of shields move towards one another, we see that figures are crouched behind each shield. The two rows stop close to each other, and we see that the "soldiers" are young, pre-pubescent boys. They crouch down and throw rocks at each other. Some boys fall down as casualties with blood running down their temples; others engage in hand-to-hand combat while a dramatic chorus sings a disturbing battle song. Adult Antonio watches the battle from the sidelines. This scene, while



somewhat comic due to its ridiculousness, also underscores the arbitrary and senseless violence of war in general and the Spanish Civil War, specifically. The boys are lined up to kill each other in the prime of their youth, and everyone suffers as a result.

RELATIONSHIP

Fatherhood

Although Saura and Azcona explore various facets of family life (including the fraught marriage between Antonio and Luchy), the most important relationship is that of father and son, which is played out in various ways. Pedro's actions and attitudes as Antonio's father constitute the crux of the plot—it is Pedro's therapy and reenactments that contextualize Antonio's life. Pedro is the leader in Antonio's recovery, so much so that the viewer thinks that don Pedro is a doctor or psychiatrist rather than the family patriarch. Moreover, the family business is passed down from father to son across the generations. Before the accident, Pedro acted as Antonio's model and mentor, and they enjoyed an affectionate relationship. In addition, Antonio's mother died when he was still quite young, which only strengthened their bond. This close relationship is juxtaposed with the ambiguous relationship between Antonio and his teenage son, Tony. On the one hand, Tony shows his father kindness when he enters his bedroom, and he also lives vicariously through his father's affair with Nicole. On the other hand, Tony remains in a state of rebellion, and he throws out Antonio during their improvised bedroom scene. When Tony calls his father a lazy good-for-nothing, it is unclear if Antonio is remembering what his father said to him or what he said to Tony, or even whether that harsh exchange happened at all. In any case, the scene provides a portrait of an unhealthy father-son relationship. On a more grandiose scale, Saura and Azcona characterize Franco as the abusive "father" of the nation, and there are also references to the Catholic concept of the Trinity and God as the father of humanity.

Illustrative Moment: Pedro Tries to Reinstate Antonio as CEO

Pedro and Antonio enter the boardroom with several smoking colleagues. Antonio starts to give a report on expenses and prices, but he quickly loses his place and can't continue. Another associate completes the sentence and tells the others that Antonio is merely reciting an old speech. Pedro tries to prompt Antonio, but Antonio loses the thread completely and can only say "My head." One of the associates suggests that Pedro declare Antonio legally incompetent, but Pedro resists, saying "He was the one who built up this company." The associates try to comfort Pedro but say that they must save the company. While this scene emphasizes Pedro's love for his son (and his desire that he return to his pre-accident self), it also acts as a reminder to the viewer that the Cano dynasty is over. What was once passed down from father to son has slipped out of the family's fingers, just as the dictatorship is on the verge of implosion in 1970. Pedro can attempt to hang on to his family fortune and prestige, but it is a lost cause.



PAST

Memory

Much of the narrative and structural complexity of the film depends on deciphering whether a scene from the past is a memory, a fantasy, a reenactment, or a combination of two or more categories. When Pedro stages the reenactments, it is likely that he is basing the action on his own memories as a parent or moments of childhood joy or fear that Antonio described pre-accident. However, we the viewers do not know if the reenactments are accurate representations of past events or are manipulated to heighten their emotional impact. For example, did Pedro really throw young Antonio into a room with a huge hog and lock him in, or is this nightmarish scenario a distorted interpretation of a time when Antonio was punished in a less horrific way? When a sequence is revealed to be an imagined fantasy, we similarly do not know to what extent the fantasy is based on actual events. For example, it is likely that Antonio's aunt did check on him and give him cough syrup when he was sick in bed, but it is unlikely that they kissed passionately. Along with purposefully confusing the viewer, Saura and Azcona use these intersecting narratives to suggest that memory is unreliable but also valuable. In the case of Antonio, his memories are the key to the family fortune. Moreover, his memories are emotionally true even if the events are not

accurate. This recognition extends to the Spanish collective memory and national history. Saura reminds his countrymen of the necessity to remember and record recent history.

Illustrative Moment: Pedro and the Nurse Show Antonio the Family History

The nurse pushes Antonio in his wheelchair in front of a series of blown-up photos, many of which are family portraits and candid shots. Photos 6 and 7 contain different shots of the family factory, although the first also contains a battle scene in front of the factory, where a soldier on horseback (in a Napoleon-style hat) is riding down an enemy combatant. Pedro explains that Antonio's grandfather was gifted part of the first factory by a nobleman, then gradually became the sole owner. Pedro goes on to explain the recent history of the factory—specifically, how Antonio took advantage of the post-war vacuum in the 1940s to greatly expand production. Pedro plays a recording of a rousing speech that Antonio gave to the press in which he encouraged each worker to value his own contributions to the state. Antonio starts to remember the specific phrases of the speech, and he recites them in tandem with the recording. In this sequence, Pedro has created a literal historical exhibition in which the photos of the factory and the recordings of Antonio's old speeches provide the artifacts of family history. Then, Pedro's narrative serves as the labels that tell a cogent story. In this sense, the exhibition is a combination of Pedro's interpretation of his own memories and Antonio's memories (which he is attempting to unlock via this exercise).



APPEARANCE

Performance and Metatheatre

Almost every scene in the film is a performance within a performance. Pedro and the family are literally staging scenes from Antonio's childhood and performing those arranged scenes in front of him. In addition, they hired at least one actress to play Antonio's young mother in the years leading up to her death. Even when Antonio takes part in the scene, the performance becomes an improvisation based on a pre-arranged premise. A perfect example of this type of performance occurs with the hunting scene, where Pedro had clearly instructed Antonio's friends to say and do specific things, yet the "players" improvise dialogue as Antonio himself reacts to pulling the trigger. Even when Pedro does not orchestrate a full reenactment, he creates narratives that have performative elements, such as showing film footage of a battle or creating an exhibition of family history for Antonio to study. Pedro continually tells and shows Antonio stories. In addition to the actual reenactments, Saura and Azcona also expose the process of performance before and after the performance itself. The "actors" get ready by putting on make-up and styling their hair, and they must put on the correct period costume. Pedro, as the director, intervenes in the performance to give notes to the actors, and the family also acts as an audience for the theatrical scenes (such as when everyone watches Antonio and Nicole in bed). The film as a whole becomes a perpetual meta exercise in which the line between reality and fiction becomes increasingly blurred.

Illustrative Moment: The Actress Playing Antonio's Mother Puts on Make-Up

There is a sudden cut to an elegant woman putting on her makeup in front of a curio with three mirrors. We see the reflection of a maid in the mirror as the woman primps, then a man in a suit standing behind her. The older man expresses his approval but suggests that the woman put on more lipstick and lipliner. Another woman enters and goes over to the seated woman. She helps the seated woman style her hair while the old man further suggests that the seated woman use a pin to separate her eyelashes, which she does. Not only is the actress getting ready to play Antonio's mother, but we also see the rest of the cast preparing and even directing her. Right from the beginning, then, Saura prepares us to expect a play within a play.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How many narratives are at play in the film? What is the effect of including Antonio's fantasies and nightmares alongside memories and reenactments?
2. In what ways does Saura create confusion in the viewer?

3. How does Saura use colors and frames to characterize different scenes? What is the symbolism of red?
4. How is the Spanish Civil War depicted in the film?
5. What are Pedro's motivations?
6. What is the effect of referencing paintings, plays, and other films throughout the film?
7. How does Saura use music and sound effects strategically?