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# NEL GIARDINO DELLE ROSE

(AGE OF DISCRETION)  
(ITALIAN)

A Surf Film, Dania Film (in collaboration with Reteitalia) presentation. Executive producer, Pietro Innocenzi. Directed by Luciano Martino. Screenplay, Martino, Sauro Scavolini; camera (color), Luigi Kuweiller; editor, Amedeo Salfa; sound, Raffaele de Luca; set design, Giuseppe Pirrotta. Reviewed at the Montreal World Film Festival, Aug. 29, 1990. Running time: 94 MIN.

With: Ottavia Piccolo, Massimo Ghini, Barbara de Rossi, Gioia Scola, Rossy de Palma, Gianfranco Manfredi, Leo Gullotta, Giancarlo Giannini, Galeazzo Benti, Remo Girone, Alessandro Borrelli, Angelo Barnabacci.

**T**his is the stuff great soap operas are made of. Sad, tender, weepy scenes about a tragic mother/son relationship left few dry eyes at its world preem. Television is the only foreign window for this type of tragedy, which middle-class America relentlessly devours.

It could never be argued that this is a great film, but its meticulous development and prolonged suspense begot a strong emotional reaction from the audience. The story builds slowly until the source of misunderstanding between them is finally revealed.

It begins in a rose garden (literal translation of the title: "in the rose garden") where the young mother recites poetry to her boy, Claudio. "Footsteps echo in memory along the corridor we didn't take to the door we never opened..." The film subtly details which footsteps echo in her memory, along the unexplored corridor to a door she locked many years ago.

Years later, Claudio is a successful yuppie living in Milan with his girlfriend. His mother is a lonely, debt-ridden widow who lives in a dreamworld in Naples with her dog. They never see each other. He never calls.

Claudio has never confronted his mother about a scene which changed both their lives. When he was young, he once saw her with her fellow schoolteacher Tramontano (a character never developed in the film, but played sentimentally by Giancarlo Giannini) in a tender embrace.

Assuming she had betrayed his drunken father, Claudio began a lifelong resentment of his beloved mother. Even though he was taunted by his classmates, who also assumed she was having an affair, he chose to assume she was guilty rather than express his feelings and ask her what happened.

Claudio became incapable of developing any positive relationship with a woman, as evidenced by his girlfriend who accuses him of "sleeping with women only to collect scalps." He is a tragic figure, preoccupied by memories of his lost mother. Freud would have loved this script.

He is forced to confront his feelings only when he receives a call that his mother is on her deathbed. An airplane strike prevents him from flying to Naples, and the last third of the pic is his road trip to see her one last time. By the time he arrives, she's dead and Tramontano, her last friend in the world, gives him a letter.

Per the letter, she never slept with the man she loved (Tramontano) but could never tell Claudio that because he never asked. By the time he reads her side of the story, it's too late, but he's supposed to go on living with the knowledge of that rose garden poem about unopened doors and echoing corridors. Sob.

This pic is seriously sentimental, but it works. Well-acted and edited, it builds at a soap-opera snail's pace until the tragedy is revealed. — *Suze*.