



fish

*Nostalgia*  
(Italy 2022)

**Spoiler alert: You may prefer to read this review after the screening**

DIRECTOR : Mario Martone  
RUNNING TIME : 118 mins  
RATING : [M]

**Synopsis:**

After 40 years away, a man with a troubled past, returns to Naples to visit his aging mother. Despite advice from the local priest to leave his past behind him, he seeks out his boyhood friend.

**Review: Lovia Gyarkye**

Mario Martone's moody drama *Nostalgia* marks a shift for the director — or maybe it's more accurate to call it a return. The Italian auteur's earlier films, like *Rehearsals for War* and *The Smell of Blood*, were lauded for their distinctive style and moral clarity. Martone's more recent projects were less well received.

In *Nostalgia*, an adaptation of Neapolitan writer Ermanno Rea's novel, Martone delivers a more straightforward, thriller-esque drama. Running at almost two hours, the film could have used additional fine-tuning. Still, with a formidable cast, assured direction and skilful camerawork, *Nostalgia* proves to be a surprisingly absorbing film.

*Nostalgia's* constraints are key to its effectiveness. This is not a complex biography wrestling with the life and ideas of an important Italian figure. It's a more familiar story, set in contemporary times: After decades abroad, a man returns to his neighbourhood in Naples for closure. Wistful memories quickly subsume him, and he finds himself enamoured with the place he swore he'd left behind. The contained narrative gives *Nostalgia* a sharp focus and clarity. And instead of shooting across the entire city of Naples, Martone narrows the film's locale to a single neighbourhood: Rione Sanità, an area plagued by poverty and governmental neglect. It's a site that the director visited in his 2019 film *The Mayor of Rione Sanità*, and that familiarity infuses this project with a crucial intimacy.

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**FILMS IN THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS INC**

10.00 am Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> April 2024

8.15 pm Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> April 2024

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## **Review:** Cont.

Returning is an act of encountering the old and the new at once, and Martone's ability to convey that friction is one of *Nostalgia's* strengths. The film begins with Felice Lasco (Pierfrancesco Favino), an inhibited 55-year-old businessman, returning to Sanità to visit his aging mother, Teresa (Aurora Quattrocchi). The neighbourhood — where he lived until he was 15 — has changed considerably, but Felice doesn't (or can't seem to) acknowledge that yet. What he does know is that his mother is partially blind and has been conned into moving into the dimly lit ground floor apartment of the now poorly maintained building. The upsetting discovery prompts Felice to find her new lodgings — a bigger apartment with a lemon tree in the garden.

Martone paints an aching portrait of a mother and son's physical and temporal distance, giving us an opportunity to understand part of Felice's motivations for returning. A particularly moving sequence, involving Felice giving Teresa a bath, is testament to how their relationship has changed over the years — a mother now in the care of her son. It's through these scenes that we also come to understand how much Felice has changed: After traveling across Africa with his uncle, he settled in Cairo where he married a woman (about whom not much is revealed), started a successful business, learned Arabic and became a Muslim.

Teresa's death — abrupt, undramatic — ruptures Felice's relationship to Sanità. He doesn't have a real reason to stay, but he also doesn't feel ready to leave. He finds himself walking through alleyways, treading familiar paths while reliving memories. It's through these flashbacks — which Martone intercuts with Felice's present-day wanderings — that another reason for our flâneur's return is revealed.

Oreste Spasiano (Tommaso Ragno) was one of Felice's best friends, a brother really, with whom he would ride through Sanità's streets, swim naked at the beach and commit petty theft. Whereas Felice fled the country after a fatal accident, Oreste stayed. Forty years later he is simply known as Badman, the leader of the neighbourhood's most dangerous gang. Despite several warnings from current residents, including the local priest Don Luigi Rega (played by Francesco Di Leva), Felice wants to talk to Oreste.

Felice's memories of the notorious gang leader differ from neighbourhood lore. In his mind, he and Oreste still have much in common. They are the teenagers who used to ride around Sanità, the boys with a deep fraternal bond. Yet memories, like nostalgia, can be a trap; revisit them enough and you risk losing sight of the present. That's what happens to Felice: His weeks in Sanità turn into months, and he eventually decides he wants to buy a house and never leave. A roughly translated Pasolini quote that opened the film begins to haunt Felice's movement: "Knowledge lies in nostalgia."

Felice and Oreste eventually meet, their encounter crackling with tension. Favino and Ragno both give strong performances as two friends whose muddied relationship is plagued by betrayal and misunderstanding. They manoeuvre their big scene with a quietness that underscores how time and distance have changed (and not changed) the two men.

The film obsessively circles the theme of nostalgia, investigating its romances and its dangers. But at a certain point, it begins to feel elliptical and dissatisfying — a distraction from a perfectly fine study of a man wrestling with his return.

Source: [www.hollywoodreporter.com](http://www.hollywoodreporter.com) – Lovia Gyarkye 24/5/2022 Edited extracts accessed 1/1/2024.

## **Some Thoughts on: *Saint Omer***

I found this film hard work, to say the least, but warmed to it more as the film progressed AND the end was finally within reach.

Despite the need for heavy editing of the prolonged succession of close ups, a rather confused introduction of characters and the clumsy initial use of flashbacks, there were moments of serious emotional engagement and thought-provoking questions based on differing cultural values and mores and on the question of infanticide itself and post-natal depression.

As the film advanced I felt that the accused, Mrs Coly, became much less a defendant and book topic to Rama, and more a reflection of herself, with a similar background story and the realisation that she herself was pregnant. Her attendance at court suddenly took on a very different significance for her.

I appreciated the thought-provoking notion of sorcery as a defence and I loved the final summing up by the defence lawyer. Moving stuff.

I love films set around court proceedings, the drama is exquisite. I'm thinking of Henry Fonda in *Twelve Angry Men*, Gregory Peck in *To Kill a Mocking Bird* and Cruise Vs Nicholson in *A Few Good Men* etc, etc. Whilst this outing didn't have that level of dramatic intensity, its more basic production still induced a high level of emotional engagement as we all pondered upon this very disturbing case.

**Ross Armfield.**

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**Are your postal and email addresses up to date?**

**If not, can you please email us by 10 April 2024 [fishfilmsadmin@gmail.com](mailto:fishfilmsadmin@gmail.com)**

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## **LOOKING AHEAD: Membership Renewal Process**

On 1<sup>st</sup> May 2024, members will receive an email detailing the new renewal process.

Renewals can no longer be received by post nor can cheque or cash payments be accepted.

Information for prospective new members will be available on the FISH website.

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## Message from the President

We thank Jeanetta Kettle wholeheartedly for her insightful review of *Alcarras* and invite all of our members to submit reviews. We all bring different perceptions (born of different life experiences) to our films and we can all learn from discussion.

Highlands Creative has almost finished the on-line membership renewal process and it was demonstrated at our last meeting. It is very user friendly. There will be a video of steps on our website and Steve will be in the foyer half an hour before both May screenings (19th and 21st) to talk the hesitant through the process. Payment will be by credit card only.

This will save literally hundreds of hours of cross-referencing pieces of paper and bank details. The information and dates will be in our newsletter.

Should you know people desperate to join FISH (and we all do), please tell them to watch our website for information regarding new membership applications. At the moment we envisage this process will run from 23<sup>rd</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2024. We are unable to expand our membership, hence the success of applications cannot be guaranteed as vacancies are likely to be limited.

Roz Garwen

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## COMING UP

May	<i>The Last Film Show</i> [India]	Sunday 19 <sup>th</sup> & Tuesday 21 <sup>st</sup>
June	<i>Goliath</i> [France]	Sunday 16 <sup>th</sup> & Tuesday 18 <sup>th</sup>

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