



NEW RELEASES

Parallel Mothers **(Madres paralelas)**

SPOILER WARNING The following notes give away some of the plot.

Pedro Almodóvar on 'Parallel Mothers'

Two women, Janis and Ana, coincide in a hospital room where they are going to give birth. Both are single and became pregnant by accident. Janis, middle-aged, doesn't regret it and she is exultant. The other, Ana, an adolescent, is scared, repentant and traumatised. Janis tries to encourage her while they move like sleepwalkers along the hospital corridors. The few words they exchange in those hours will create a very close link between the two, which by chance develops and complicates, and changes their lives in a decisive way.

For Penélope Cruz, playing Janis has been a real tour de force. During a large part of the film her character moves with a double intention. All her actions are determined by the contradiction in which she lives and by fear. This contradiction is very difficult to play, especially because Ana fits perfectly into her new role and becomes an adorable being for her daughter and for the mother, which increases her sense of guilt.

I admit that I am fascinated by Janis' complexity and determination. Half-way through writing, when the characters are already alive, at times they become independent of the author, and he can only put himself at their service like a notary or a medium. It is a part of the gestation of the script that, when it happens, always in the second or third draft, subjugates me. This part of the writing process is very mysterious and difficult to explain. It happened to me with Janis. I think that her situation is the most difficult one in which I have put any character until now (along with that of Elena Anaya in *The Skin I Live In*). The originality and darkness of her situation made it difficult to offer Penélope Cruz any references that existed in real life. Directing her has been a meticulous process where I needed her to surrender herself to me as if in a state of hypnosis. I contained the flood of tears, Penélope is very emotional and she would have been crying from start to finish, and she knew how to replace them with the exact amount of guilt and shame, in a state of constant alarm.

The theme of Franco's mass graves is an important one, which I try to show tangentially at the end. In the first drafts it had a greater presence, but it absorbed everything around it. It is too strong a theme to combine with others and, from the outset, I wanted to tell of Janis' difficulties, her story with Ana and that of their daughters, the moral dilemma in which she lives. In order to develop this storyline, I decided to leave the opening of the grave for the end. Even so, I hope that its presence in the film helps raise awareness of what is an urgent problem in Spanish society today.

I have treated the subject with great delicacy because I am not settling scores with our history, just as families of the victims are not demanding anything other than a headstone on which to put the name of their loved ones and being able to bury them in a dignified place where they can honor them. It is something that Spanish society owes them today and it is an urgent debt

because now it is the generation of great-grandchildren who are calling for the excavation of the graves. This is something which surprised Ariel Dulitzky, rapporteur for the United Nations, during his visit to Spain in 2013, that the grandchildren and great-grandchildren were the first generations to ask about their ancestors and demand that the graves be opened to honor and pay tribute to them. It is a solution that in the best of cases will never be able to identify all the missing people, only a quarter of them according to Francisco Etxeberria, forensic anthropologist commissioned by the current government to draw up a report on the present situation with mass graves.

The film changes in the final stretch, from the journey by Janis and Arturo to her town to take DNA samples from relatives of the victims. The statements by all of them are taken from reality. Despite the drama of our past, the civil war, the film enters an area of relief and emotion. There is no settling of scores or feelings of revenge in the relatives' statements. At the end, once the grave is emptied, the members of the NGO who have excavated it and some relatives lie down in it, imitating the positions in which the bodies were found. It is a tribute from the living to the dead.

Among the relatives who have remained outside are Ana, Janis and little Cecilia. The film ends with a shot of the little girl looking into the grave. It is the gaze of the future, Cecilia will always remember that moment.

It was hard to shoot that close-up of the little girl, Luna Auria Contreras, who plays Cecilia when she is barely two years old.

During the first two months Luna became familiar with Penélope and Milena and we could film all the scenes from the script with no problem, but during the shooting period the child grew and was no longer an infant who went from hand to hand. She became a child of almost two who was starting to become aware of herself and to show her own will. The second last day of shooting, she refused to share a scene of a meal with her two mothers, and she wouldn't stop crying. We had to postpone shooting for two or three hours so that the child could recover. I had already written an alternative scene, improvising as we went, without the child appearing, just in case.

But my doubt was if Luna would be willing to film one of the final shots. For the film it was essential, that shot represents the memory of future generations who wouldn't forget the barbarity that the existence of those mass graves signifies for our history. But when everything was ready for filming her shot, Luna wasn't willing to stand still and kept screaming until suddenly something caught her attention and she looked in silence at the bottom of the grave, a look that I couldn't describe, but it was just what I needed.

Afterwards I became aware of how it had all happened. Virginia, the second assistant director, had become pregnant during shooting and also in the middle of it had had a miscarriage. In the final shot Virginia got into the grave to attract the child's attention and she started to sing to her the songs she probably dreamed of singing to her own baby. And Luna was captivated by those songs, she forgot about her anger, she relaxed and presented us with a long, concentrated, mysterious gaze, happily completing the shooting of the film.

These things happen at times on shoots.

Production notes

PARALLEL MOTHERS (MADRES PARALELAS)

Direction/A film by: Pedro Almodóvar
©: Remotamente Films AIE, El Deseo DASLU
Production Companies: Remotamente Films AIE, El Deseo DA
Logo: Es Cine Español
With financing from: ICAA
In association with: Pathé
With the participation of: RTVE, Netflix
Presented by: El Deseo
International Sales: FilmNation International
Executive Producer: Esther García
Producer: Agustín Almodóvar
Associate Producers: Diego Pajuelo, Bárbara Peiró
Production Manager: César Pardiñas
Production Supervisor: Federico Rozadillas
Production Co-ordinator: Covadonga R. Gamboa
Location Manager: Eduardo García
Post-production Supervisor (Deluxe Content Services España): Noelia Gorroñán Álvarez
Post-production Co-ordinator: Inma Fernández-Montes
1st Assistant Director: Manu Calvo
Script Supervisor: Yuyi Beringola
Casting: Eva Leira, Yolanda Serrano
Screenplay: Pedro Almodóvar
Director of Photography: José Luis Alcaine
Steadicam Operator: Raúl Manchado
Digital Effects: Sonsoles Aranguren
Visual Effects: El Ranchito
Special Effects: Montse Ribé
Special Effects (Exteriors): DDT
Special Effects (On Set): Reyes Abades
Graphics and Animation: Juan Gatti
Editing: Teresa Font
Editing Assistant: Nacho Ramos
Production Design: Antxón Gómez
Art Direction: Alejandra Loiseau
Set Decorator: Vicent Díaz
Set Dresser: Carlota Casado
Storyboard Artist: Pablo Buratti
Costume Designer: Paola Torres
Costume Assistant: Nuria Santos del Hierro
Hair and Make-up Designer: Pablo Iglesias
Make-up Artist: Mariló Osuna
Hair Stylist: Pablo Morillas
Music/Music Composed by: Alberto Iglesias
Music Conducted by: James Shearman
Music Orchestrated by: Alberto Iglesias
Music Recordist/Mixer: José Luis Crespo

Music Recording Engineer: Fiona Cruickshank
London Recording Studio: Air Studios
Madrid Recording Studio: Small Room
Sound Recording: Sergio Bürmann
Sound Re-recording: Marc Orts
Sound Mixing: Laia Casanovas
Dialogue Editors: Anna Harrington, Alejandro López
Sound Effects Editor: Oriol Donat i Martos
Foley Artist: Marta Monistrol
Foley Recordist: Xavi Pons
COVID Coordinator: Covadonga R. Gamboa

Cast

Penélope Cruz (*Janis*)
Milena Smit (*Ana*)
Israel Elejalde (*Arturo Buendía*)
Aitana Sánchez Gijón (*Teresa, Ana's mother*)
Rosy de Palma (*Elena*)
Julieta Serrano (*Brígida*)
Luna Auria Contreras (*Cecilia*)
Carmen Flores (*Dolores*)
Alice Davies
Ainhoa Santamaría (*nanny*)
Adelfa Calvo
Arantxa Aranguren
Inma Ochoa
Trinidad Iglesias
Julio Manrique (*Jesús*)
Ma Jesús Hoyos
Chema Adeva
Mar Vidal
Dana Santiago
Ana Peleteiro
Lorenzo Profilio
Edy Pérez
Ametz Iriondo
Adrián Navas
Yohana Yara
Pedro Casablanc
Carlotta Castro Bohórquez
Eira Rey Enríquez

Spain/France/USA 2021
123 mins

A Pathé release

NEW RELEASES

Boiling Point

From Fri 7 Jan

Licorice Pizza

From Thu 13 Jan

Memoria

From Fri 14 Jan

Parallel Mothers (Madres paralelas)

From Fri 28 Jan

The Souvenir Part II

From Fri 18 Feb

Flee

From Fri 18 Feb

La Mif (The Fam)

From Fri 25 Feb

RE-RELEASES

The 400 Blows (Les Quatre cents coups)

From Fri 7 Jan

South: Sir Ernest Shackleton's Glorious Epic of the Antarctic

From Fri 28 Jan

South: Sir Ernest Shackleton's Glorious Epic of the Antarctic

From Fri 28 Jan

Jules et Jim (Jules and Jim)

From Fri 4 Feb

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Notes may be edited or abridged. Questions/comments? Email prognotes@bfi.org.uk

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