

PARALLEL MOTHERS

Spain (2021) 123 minutes

Director: Pedro Almodóvar

Cast: Janis (Penélope Cruz)
Ana (Milena Smit)
Arturo (Israel Elejalde)
Teresa (Aitana Sanchez-Gijón)



Screening 12th October 2022 at Swindon Arts Centre

Synopsis

Two women, Janis and Ana, meet in a hospital ward about to give birth. Both are single and became pregnant by accident. Despite their very different circumstances, a bond forms between the two as their labours progress in parallel and both babies are taken off for observation at birth. The complexities and discoveries that follow are juxtaposed with a second thread to Janis's story as she seeks to uncover the truth behind her great-grandfather's tragic death under the rule of General Franco.

Reviews



Two heavily pregnant women – fortysomething photographer Janice (Penélope Cruz) and teenager Ana (Milena Smit) – share a room in a maternity hospital. The brief moment of kinship, forged through shared confidences, sweat and pain as they puff through labour in tandem, will bond them in ways they could never imagine.

Meanwhile, Janice is dealing with the legacy of the Spanish Civil War, which scarred her family and that of many of her compatriots. In other hands, this dual focus, which pulls us backwards and forwards, rooted in the past and driven to the future, might seem unwieldy.

But Pedro Almodóvar makes a light-footed dance of it, negotiating story threads that extend over decades and tie up in the present day...

Wendy Ide, The Observer

Not parallel actually: that would mean they don't touch. Here we have convergent mothers; intersecting mothers whose lives come together with a spark that ignites this moving melodrama, which audaciously draws a line between love, sex, the passionate courage of single mothers, the meaning of *Lorca's Doña Rosita the Spinster* and the unhealed wound of Spain's fascist past. Pedro Almodóvar's new movie has the warmth and the grandiloquent flair of a picture from Hollywood's golden age (something starring Bette Davis and Joan Fontaine maybe, with music by Max Steiner) and the whiplash twists and addictive sugar rush bumps of daytime soap.

As ever with Almodóvar, there are gorgeously designed interiors with fierce, thick blocks of Mondrian colour, huge close-ups of the female leads and overhead shots of food preparation. It's impossible to watch this film without just feeling grateful that its director is still so fluent, so creative, still making us a gift of these films. There is a lot going on here, and perhaps the emotions and thoughts spill over the edges of its narrative form. But it would be obtuse not to let yourself travel downstream on this film's emotional surge.

Peter Bradshaw, The Guardian

Film Facts

- *Parallel Mothers* is the seventh film collaboration between Penelope Cruz and Director Pedro Almodóvar.
- A poster for *Parallel Mothers* appeared over a decade ago in a scene of Almodóvar's 2009 film *Broken Embraces*. He was already working on the script and had made a poster.
- *Parallel Mothers* received a nine-minute standing ovation at its premiere at the Venice International Film Festival.

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