



fish

*Pain and Glory (Dolor y Gloria)*  
(Spain 2019)

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

DIRECTOR : Pedro Almodovar

RUNNING TIME : 115mins

RATING :

**Synopsis:**

Pedro Almodóvar has found a more intensely personal register than ever for his tender new movie about an ageing film director in retreat from his profession, facing ill health, depression and the decline of his powers

**Review: Peter Bradshaw**

*Pain and Glory* is an autumnal film in a ruminative minor key, with more pain than glory – although glory does make a late resurgence. It brings Almodóvar's focus to death: his own and those of the people he loves, but also to the passion of film-making which may yet conquer death, or provide a way of coming to terms with it.

As ever, Almodóvar has made a film about pleasure, which is itself, a pleasure: witty, intelligent and sensuous. It is about love, memory, art, mothers, lovers and most of all it is about itself, which in the hands of a lesser director would be dismayingly indulgent. But Almodóvar is a master of self-reference and intertextuality: the film within a film, the story within a story, the dream within a dream. Almodóvar operates on a kind of internal combustion engine of creativity and I felt that this movie was running so smoothly and so seductively that it could have gone on for another five hours.

Antonio Banderas steps up to the role he was born to play, though without the giveaway snowy pompadour. He is Salvador Mallo, a movie director who has not made anything for years but who has accumulated enough money to live in comfort among expensive artworks, brooding on his various ailments – headaches, backaches, a tendency to choke on any solid food – and general depression; all of these having some mysterious cause-or-effect relationship with his creative block.

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**FILMS IN THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS INC**

10.00 am Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> August 2022

8.15 pm Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2022

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## **Review:** Cont.

A chance meeting with an old actor friend, Zulema (a cameo for Cecilia Roth) reconnects him with former star actor Alberto (Asier Etxeandia); they quarrelled decades ago while making his masterpiece. Dishevelled Alberto introduces Salvador to heroin, a dangerous new taste that reminds him of an abandoned autobiographical theatre script called *Addiction*, about a former lover's drug abuse. He gives it to Alberto to perform on stage and this brings people from the past back into Salvador's life – and his state of mind is suddenly altered.

All the time there are ecstatic memories of his mother, gorgeously played by Penélope Cruz and as an older woman on the brink of death by Julieta Serrano. The older mother is sharply disapproving when her son starts asking for her own memories of her life: "I don't want any of this in your films."

As ever, cinematographer José Luis Alcaíne and production designer Antxón Gómez give the film a wonderful richness and warmth, the colours swarming and popping. There are some big laughs, especially when Alberto and Salvador have been persuaded to do an onstage Q&A after a screening of their controversial film. Almodóvar may well have mixed feelings about the Q&A as a film tradition.

There is a masterful nimbleness in Almodóvar's narrative style: one thing leads on to another, or back or sideways to another, or to an associated memory, or to a created fictional version. We hop back and forth between the past and the present. If there is anything about the film that left me wistfully unsatisfied, it is that this indirectness means the full-on emotional hammer blow never quite comes: the flood of tears of joy or eroticism is somehow deflected or deferred.

There is something incomplete or unfinished in this work, but perhaps this simply represents the condition of life itself. *Pain and Glory* leaves you with a sweet sadness, but a sharp appetite for the next film.

Source: [www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com) Peter Bradshaw 18/5/2019 Last modified 13/11/2019  
Edited extracts ~ accessed 8/5/2021

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## **Some Thoughts on: *A War* (Krigeren)**

What a terrific film is *A War*. It told its story with clarity, both visually and through its characters. The patrol scenes offered insights into some of the reality of the latest Afghani war that we simply do not get from TV news footage. The legal drama made it clear that little in this (or any) war can be understood as either black or white. Snap decisions must be made, on flimsy evidence. Yet, the players on the ground must be accountable. And, so, we have the contradiction of something irrational (war in this case) being subject to rules. The great thing about this film is that it left judgements about this case, and even about its necessity, to us. Let's hope this film gets out on general release.

**Ian Bowie**

## Some Thoughts continued...

What another tremendous film we were privileged to experience from FISH in July.

This extraordinarily engaging and thought-provoking cinema experience was the most absorbing moral dilemma that we've been presented with in ages. It left us aghast at the consequences of war and unsure of where the responsibility of the depicted events lay.

First up though, I thought the 'A' in *A War* stood for 'Any' war, not just the conflict shown. The absurdity and insanity of war were brilliantly portrayed. Who were the casualties? The Afghani people, the Taliban, the soldiers, the struggling disrupted, lonely and depressed families trying to cope at home??

Of course, all were and are victims of the madness.

The whole aim of the troops was to help and support a people being taken over by a ruthless regime, but what is that help worth if the consequences of accepting it are brutal, and more often than not, fatal?

The contrast of the children at home and those in the war zone made for powerful film making and asking for deep reflection by us, the audience.

Similarly, was Claus's decision, in the heat of battle, to call in air support to help his men correct, knowing that innocent villagers may suffer the brunt of that decision? Was he right to lie or mislead in the court case to protect his own innocent, suffering family? There were no easy answers to be had here.

Beautifully shot, the stark barren landscape, full of hidden dangers, seemed like a powerful character in its own right. The hand-held camera in the conflict zone performed its role well by adding to the confusion and chaos of battle, but I'm afraid I'm with David Stratton on this one, the hand-held instability produced can become distracting and ultimately, annoying. Full marks to the director and an amazing band of very engaging and authentic actors, children included. (Was anyone else playing 'Spot the *Borgen* Character' ???)

On the surface, it was tempting to see this film as a representation of similar events being adjudicated currently in an Australian court case involving Ben Roberts-Smith. However, I feel, apart from the fact that those events took place in the same theatre of war and involved judging active duty decisions and their consequences, the circumstances of each are completely different, primarily, heat of action versus controlled behaviours.

I thought that the most powerful moment in the film came with the beautifully subtle, penultimate shot: Claus has just put his son to bed for the night. As he prepares to leave the bedroom, he notices his son's feet protruding from the blanket at the end the bed. This is the same position and image of a child he witnessed in the village home in Afghanistan, when he visited a family that had been executed by the Taliban in retribution for accepting assistance from the Danish troops. The same family that sought protection in the compound, but were refused. Moving stuff indeed.

**Ross Armfield**

## More thoughts...

What a wonderful and extraordinary film.... so layered in its uncovering and facing of the ambiguities of war. To whom does one owe duty and loyalty; are ethics absolute or situational; what is personal and what is communal? What is or is not done in the heat of battle never remains contained there – it is and must be part of a whole legal framework of rights and duties, and even more, it will affect families and friendships back home.

This film exposed all these fractures. They're perhaps inevitable in a war which was fought in the way the Afghanistan war was fought with no one knowing who was potential "enemy" and who was not. This film had the same sort of depth and authority as the wonderful *Eye in the Sky*, with Alan Rickman; it made me question every single one of my attitudes.

I didn't know any of the actors but they were uniformly wonderful, right down to Claus's three children. I'll be thinking about it for a long time.

**Trish Topp**

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## Message from the President

Thank you to Trish Topp, Ian Bowie and Ross Armfield for providing reviews on our latest film, *A War*. This was certainly a thought-provoking insight into the effects of war, not only on those directly involved but also on soldiers' families thousands of miles away from the battlefield.

Our August screening, the Spanish film, *Pain and Glory*, has won a number of awards including Best Actor Award at Cannes for Antonio Banderas.

**Sandra Gillespie.**

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## COMING UP:

September	<i>Limbo</i> [UK]	Sunday 18 <sup>th</sup> & Tuesday 20 <sup>th</sup>
October	<i>Riders of Justice</i> [Denmark]	Sunday 16 <sup>th</sup> & Tuesday 18 <sup>th</sup>
November	<i>Skies of Lebanon</i> [Lebanon]	Sunday 20 <sup>th</sup> & Tuesday 22 <sup>nd</sup>
December	<i>Antoinette in the Cevennes</i> [France]	Sunday 11 <sup>th</sup> & Tuesday 13 <sup>th</sup>



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