



Patron: Jim Broadbent
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Julieta (Cert 15)

dir: **Pedro Almodóvar**

Starring: **Emma Suárez, Adriana Ugarte, Daniel Grao**

Sponsors: **Robert and Valerie Sargent**

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Synopsis: Madrid, present day. Julieta, a middle aged woman, is moving to Portugal with Lorenzo, her boyfriend. She meets Beatriz, a friend of her daughter Antia, from whom she is estranged and learns that her daughter now lives in Switzerland with her family. Julieta decides to remain in Madrid and moves to an apartment where she recalls the past.

As a younger woman, she meets fisherman Xoan on a train and sleeps with him. She moves to Galicia to be with him, where Antia is born. Years later she discovers that Xoan is seeing a sculptor friend, Ava. When Antia is 13, Xoan is killed in a storm at sea. Julieta and Antia move to Madrid. Antia attends a spiritual retreat without telling her mother and breaks off communication. Julieta learns from Ava that Antia blames Ava and her mother for Xoan's death. Julieta receives a letter from Antia telling her that her son has died. Julieta and Lorenzo leave for a possible reconciliation.

One of the enduring pleasures of Pedro Almodóvar's cinema is his mastery of narrative complexity: his films often seem to be generated by a set of completely disparate events and ideas from which he constructs narratives that are coherent but nevertheless tend to burst at the seams with their own sometimes narrowly contained dissonances and incongruities, *Julieta* is entirely characteristic of Almodóvar in the sheer density of elements, both narrative and symbolic that it comprises; among them the geographic diversity of the settings; a heroine, Julieta, played at different ages by two actresses; the chain of Julieta's different homes; and symbolic ingredients that include a stag glimpsed at night from a train window; a lecture on Greek mythology and the statuettes of seated men with truncated limbs made by Julieta's sculptor friend, Ava.

The miracle of *Julieta* is that it feels as loose and multiple as the above suggests, yet at the same time very tight and unified. Among the film's themes are the complexity and seeming diffuseness of a person's life, and the hidden patterns created by the interaction of contingency and memory; as an academic specialising in Greek myth, Julieta is a highly qualified reader of the 'novel' of her existence.

The film is Almodóvar's third literary adaptation, following the Ruth Rendell-inspired *Live Flesh* (1997) and *The Skin I Live In* (2011), based on Thierry Jonquet's *Tarantula*. This time, however, the source is not a novel but three consecutive short stories from Alice Munro's 2004 collection *Runaway*. Although each Munro story stands alone and covers a separate episode and theme, cross-references make it clear that they can all be read as concerning the same woman, Juliet, at different periods. Munro's three stories effectively provide all the material that Almodóvar dramatises here.



Where the director has scope to make his film properly Almodóvarian is partly in knitting Munro's three vignettes into a single narrative of characteristic intricacy; and partly in imposing his unmistakable stylistic signature, with all the signals of Spanishness that entails. Originally planned as his first English-Language film, *Julieta* has been transplanted from the original Canadian settings to Madrid, Galicia, the Pyrenees and elsewhere. The film is steeped in overtly foregrounded style, right from the image seen in the opening credits: draped red fabric that pulses like a human heart but turns out to be Julieta's dress. Throughout, the expressionistic exuberance that we associate with the Almodóvar look is rooted firmly in a realistic everyday context by Antxón Gómez's production design and Sonia Grande's costumes: we are constantly shown the autonomous expressive power of, say, a certain wallpaper pattern, shelves of Galician pottery, the retro dress worn by Julieta's elderly mother. There is also the Klimt-style dressing gown that Julieta wears in one of her solitary moments, its vividness strikingly clashing with her melancholy: and perhaps itself helping to save her from outright despair.

This tantalisingly open-ended film is Almodóvar's most sombre to date: it is to his last feature, 2013's airline farce *I'm So Excited!* as *Interiors* (1978) was to Woody Allen's *Bananas* (1971). *Julieta* is overtly serious in its concern with loss and the mature retrospective contemplation of life's complexity, its visual energy contrasting strongly with its emotional severity and the almost total absence of other comedy or manifest narrative playfulness (the only echo of the famed Almodóvar 'camp' is a glimpse of one character's fashionista friends). Where he is often associated with melodrama, in *Julieta*, Almodóvar professes to be creating 'pure drama', free of excess or fancy: hence the part played by classical mythology, which young Julieta teaches, and which reinforces the transcendental resonances of her own experience.

Above all, *Julieta* is a study in duality. It involves, for example, two young women, both grief-stricken for their presumed responsibility for a death (a train suicide in Julieta's case, in the case of her daughter Antia, the drowning of her father) and the two relationships involving other women in the frame (Ava's double is the young North African mistress of Julieta's father). The doubling begins with the fact that the heroine is played by two different actresses. The young Julieta, a vital, intellectually energetic young

woman open to all that life can offer her, is played by Adriana Ugarte and visually presented in a heightened manner. She's first seen in bright blue stockings and leather miniskirt. With a shock of blond hair, as if she's stepped out of a mid-80's Almodóvar comedy - or as if she were the older Julieta's stylised version of her remembered self.

The Julieta of the framing narrative is played with a deeply poignant careworn dignity by Emma Suárez, whom UK audiences may remember as an angelic *ingénue* in such Julio Medem films as *Tierra* (1996). Twenty years on, she's a perfect fit for a 'haunted mature woman' role that might previously been played by Marisa Paredes. Almodóvar cleverly, but in no way callously, makes capital of the fact that Suárez is visibly older than some viewers may remember her - notably in the extraordinary *coup de cinéma* in which Julieta (Ugarte), bathed by her daughter, emerges from under a towel several years later as her older self (Suárez), her face visibly marked by life's cares. In the version of this scene depicted in the film's poster, the protective, caring Antia (never seen in the film as a grown woman) is replaced by the younger Julieta as played by Ugarte, highlighting the lesson of *Julieta's* interweaving of doubling, maternity and memory: to wit, that the child is mother to the woman.

Credits

Emma Suárez	Julieta
Adriana Ugarte	Young Julieta
Daniel Grao	Xoan
Inma Cuesta	Ava
Dario Grandinetti	Lorenzo
Michelle Jenner	Beatriz, 'Bea'
Pilar Castro	Claudia
Nathalie Poza	Juana
Susi Sánchez	Sara
Joaquin Notario	Samuel
Priscilla Delgado, Blanca Parés, Ariadna Martín	Antia, Julieta's daughter
Rossy de Palma	Marian
Director	Pedro Almodóvar
Screenplay	Pedro Almodóvar (<i>from the stories Destination, Soon and Silence by Alice Munro</i>)
Director of Photography	Jean-Claude Larrieu
Editor	José Salcedo
Art Director	Antxón Gómez
Music	Alberto Iglesias
Sound recording	Sergio Bürmann
Costume	Sonia Grande

Spain 2016. 99 mins

Another View

Few contemporary filmmakers are able to use colour with such painterly, masterful splendour as Pedro Almodóvar. The opening frame of Julieta is a vivid close up of the folds of a scarlet dress, billowing ever so slowly. Visually alluring, their movement resembles that of a heart, rhythmically expanding and contracting. The great Spanish director's latest is a deeply moving, personal and superbly acted endeavour which plays out with the suspense and all-or-nothing stakes of a muted thriller.

Never offering the moment of catharsis which this passionate tale of love, loss and regret may warrant, such magnificent imagery continues throughout in a three-tone world of primary colours. We draw back from this beating heart to see a lady in red who will become the driving force behind a mother's search for her daughter. Based on stories by Canadian novelist Alice Munro, Julieta spans decades. First meeting her nearer to modern day,

Emma Suárez embodies Julieta as an older woman. A delicate whirlwind of pained emotions, determination and resignation her performance soars. Days before a planned move to Portugal with her partner Lorenzo (Dario Grandinetti), a chance meeting with her daughter's childhood friend, Beatriz (Michelle Jenner), lets her know that she is at least alive and well.

Beatriz's curious description of Antia as wearing no makeup, "skinny but very pretty" sets out the importance of surface appearance as the film begins. As truths are revealed and all hope in a successful conclusion seemingly dissipates, cracks appear and colours fade: Julieta's apartment - to which we will return at the end - is unusually dull, barring a few splashes of colour, and a fateful accident will leave her battered and bruised; a far cry from the early pristine elegance. As the wheels come off so a lacquered veneer becomes tarnished but breaking through all that is skin deep to the heart of the matter. Cancelling her trip to Portugal and ending a relationship, a script taken from the pages of a book then proceeds in similarly epistolary fashion as Julieta puts pen to paper in an effort to exorcise demons and speak to a child she has not seen in many years. Her confessional and narration transport us in extended flashback to twenty five years earlier.

Adriana Ugarte is the younger incarnation of Julieta, putting in a similarly impressive turn as her elder self, while Rossy de Palma steals every scene her housekeeper, Marina, appears. Meeting a future husband, Xoan (Daniel Grao), after avoiding another man on a train journey takes one life but gives rise to another - Antia. Guilt hangs in the air for much of Julieta and Almodóvar presents understanding and the desire for reconciliation as co-dependent and equally significant elements of his narrative. This is an affecting, economical and supremely crafted return to form for the Spanish auteur.

Matthew Anderson, Cinevue

Our final screening - Friday May 12th, 7.30pm Little Men (USA 2016. Cert PG)

Teenager Jake lives with his parents Brian & Kathy. When his grandfather dies, the family moves into the larger Brooklyn apartment they inherit, the ground floor of which is occupied by a dressmaker's shop run by Leonor Calvelli. Her son Tony and Jake - temperamental opposites - soon become good friends. Both have artistic ambitions and hope to get into the same high school. But their friendship is sternly tested when a row develops between their parents over the rent Leonor has been paying for her shop. Two great performances from Michael Barbieri and Theo Taplitz lie at the heart of Ira Sachs' touching drama about childhood friendship and the damage it can suffer when money matters intrude. Little Men may only be 85 minutes long, but it provides a strong finish to the season.

The Committee wish to thank everyone who has supported the Society over the past 8 months in what has been our best ever season, both for the exceptional quality and variety of the films and the number of people who have come to see them.

We hope you enjoy the summer to come and look forward to seeing you all again when we return for our 65th season, which begins on Friday September 8th.

The new programme is expected to be available in early July. Please check our website, Facebook page and on Twitter for news of any updates during the close season - and don't forget that membership for 2017-18 remains available until May 31st.

