Cinema and Glory

Almodóvar's Aging Journey Through Space, Time, Pain, and Loss

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Abstract: *This chapter analyses Pedro Almodóvar's 2019 Pain and Glory as a metaphorical journey of the ageing self. This journey follows the concept of ageing as illness and decline thus triggering the nostalgic act of remembering and recreating an irrecoverable past to overcome the nearness of death. By describing his passage from midlife (crisis) to the third age as the accumulation of ailments and the lack of sexual desire, the protagonist, Salvador Mallo, follows the medicalization of old age. It is only through heroin and cinema that he can get rid of the pain he feels and can 'return' to his own 'happy' past. The idealization of his (lost) childhood in the poor rural Spain of the early 50s is recreated using bright colours and happy songs and the figure of the mother. In opposition, Salvador's move to Madrid in the 80s is not directly presented on screen. His life there is recalled through two male figures who reappear in the present: Alberto (the star of his film Sabor) and Federico (Salvador's lover in the 80s). The Madrid of the 80s is indirectly depicted through Salvador's play (Adicción) and film Sabor as both the epicentre of Spanish creativity and homosexuality, but also as the space in which drugs killed and destroyed the lives of many. Finally, this study shows how late-life creativity in the film is conceived as a time for recycling memories, and the film itself as the space for recycling Salvador's earlier films to display his global glory.*

Keywords: *Pedro Almodóvar; Pain and Glory; ageing; decline; time; space; death; creativity; remembering; La Movida*

Introduction

Pedro Almodóvar's film *Dolor y gloria* (*Pain and Glory*) (2019) is a physical, mental, and cinematographic journey through time and space. The main character's (Salvador Mallo) journey from childhood to the third age is remembered and (re)created through the memories triggered by heroin. Salvador's memories are filtered by the concept of ageing as decline (Gullette 2004), illness, and death that is first manifested in the figure of his mother, and subsequently in himself. By describing his passage from midlife (crisis) to the third age as the accumulation of ailments and lack of sexual desire, Salvador follows the medicalisation of old age and conceptualises it as the final decline towards death. Through heroin and cinema, he is not only able to get rid of the pain but also to 'move back' to his own 'happy' past in a clear idealisation of childhood (as well as of the mother) in contrast to late life.

This chapter aims to analyse *Pain and Glory* as a metaphorical and creative journey of the ageing self. On the one hand, this journey is shaped by the concept of ageing as illness and decline and by the nostalgic act of confronting death through remembering and recreating an irrecoverable past. For instance, it is this almost universalised concept of ageing as decline (Gullette 2004) that allows global audiences to effortlessly identify with Salvador's experience. On the other hand, this analysis addresses how Almodóvar uses internal migration flows in Spain during the 50s and 60s to depict and idealise a lost past. For example, whereas his childhood in the poor rural Spain of the early fifties is romanticised by using an array of well-known stereotypes about Spain that are easily understood by global audiences, Salvador's move to Madrid in the 80s (the less globally known part of Almodóvar's career) is not directly presented on screen. His life there is recalled through two male figures close to him who reappear in the present: Alberto (the star of his early film *Sabor*) and Federico (Salvador's lover). Madrid in the 80s is indirectly depicted as the centre of creativity and homosexuality, but also as the space in which drugs killed and destroyed the lives of many. It is a city from which Salvador is able to escape thanks to the global success of his films, but a city to which he consistently returns. Therefore, Madrid in the 21st

century is portrayed as the space in which Salvador's physical 'decline' and his creative 'resurrection' can coexist. This chapter also explores how late-life creativity (both within and outside of the film) is conceived as a time for recycling memories, and the film itself as the space for recycling Salvador's earlier films to show his global glory.

The film *Pain and Glory* follows the life of a film director, Salvador Mallo (Antonio Banderas), through three narrative storylines. In the first storyline, we see his present life – a depressed filmmaker in his 60s who has been diagnosed with Forestier's Syndrome.[1] After having achieved big successes, he now lives a lonely life marked by illness and a lack of creative inspiration. A second storyline shares young Salvador's loving relationship with his mother Jacinta (Penélope Cruz). In between these two narrative threads, the film offers a third one, a middle-aged man looking after his mother before she dies. By using prolepsis and analepsis, the narrative oscillates between the three timelines to show us snippets of Salvador's life across the years. However, as the audience will realise at the end of the film, which one of these three times is real and not fictional is not an easy question to answer.

Spatially, these three storylines are set in two places: the rural and poor Paterna (childhood) and the urban and rich city of Madrid (from the 80s – the Movida – to the present time). In between these two spaces, Salvador travels around the world as an acclaimed and award-winning film director. But again, the end of the film has the function of blurring the boundaries between real spaces and staged ones, thus problematising any possible connection between the film's events and Almodóvar's real life.

Some scholars have divided Almodóvar's films into two periods: a first one characterised by comedy and domestic tones in which the reversal of gender roles is foregrounded (Poyato 2015; Martínez Cano 2020) and a second one characterised by the dramatic tones that emerge from

1 Diffuse idiopathic skeletal hyperostosis (DISH) is a condition commonly affecting male individuals older than 50 years of age. It is characterized by calcification (bony hardening) of ligaments, tendons, and joint capsule insertions (Mader, Verlaan and Buskila 2013, 741).

the centrality that desire, pain, loss, and death acquire (Poyato 2015, 9). Paul Julian Smith (2003) denominates these two periods (following Picasso's creative stages) the *pink period* – films until 1995—and the *blue period* –films from 1995 onwards). Smith describes the gayness that characterises the pink period disappears in the blue period. Barbara Zecchi (2015), following Smith's division, argues that these two periods highlight the evolution of Almodóvar's cinema from optic to haptic, or as she claims, from gay to new queer. Rooting both periods in the transgression of the heteronormative hegemonic gaze, Zecchi (2015) notes that the second period moves beyond the festive transgression of the optic period towards a haptic period that stresses the destabilisation of sexual identity.

Josep M. Armengol and Agustina Varela-Manograsso (2022) have approached *Pain and Glory* from the perspectives of ageing studies, queer studies, and sociology. They argue that the film articulates the idea that gay men are frightened of ageing due to the celebration of youth that the gay culture has focused on. Moreover, they highlight that the "youthism" of gayness has stereotyped older gays as "dirty old men", which clearly results in the scarcity of positive cultural images of older gay men. Another important point that these scholars raise is the possibility of approaching this Almodóvar's film from Jack Halberstam's (2005) notion of "queer time", thus challenging chrononormativity. Recently, Heather Jeronimo (forthcoming 2023) has tackled the film from the intersection of ageing, queer, and disability studies and rightly claims that the film *Pain and Glory* not only reveals the anxieties about old age but also misses the opportunity of locating ageing outside the binary of successful ageing/ageing as decline and making it queer.

Smith (2021) suggests that the film has three main themes: autobiography or autofiction; fluidity or liquidity; and creativity and sexuality. He claims that the initial autobiographical tone set by Banderas in the first sequences soon gives way to autofiction, in which the referent is not his life but his own films. With regards to fluidity and liquidity, Smith stresses the recurrence of water in the film (swimming pool, river, etc.) and associates it with an eroticism that transcends linearity through its persistence in time and space and therefore renders past and present

as simultaneous. Finally, Smith points out that Salvador's loss of sexual drive is parallel to his loss of creativity, which clearly differs from his youthful, happy, and sexually transgressive years of La Movida.

Some scholars have traced the autobiographical quality of the film, and therefore have stressed the parallelisms found between Almodóvar's life and the stories and characters presented in the film (Martínez Expósito 2021). The consensus seems to be that Almodóvar's film is autofiction or a fictional autobiography (Smith 2021; Martínez Expósito 2021; Gómez Gómez 2021); but one that intends to blur the autobiographical aspects and moments through different narrative techniques such as fragmentation of important life episodes and intertextuality. Martínez Expósito highlights that the fragmentation and rearrangement of the episodes is one of the distancing devices that Almodóvar uses most frequently in his films (2021, 86). Distancing the viewer from the events allows the filmmaker to make the viewer experience fragmentation as well as the need to actively participate in the chronological rearrangement of fragments.

The film is constructed through three parallel stories: the present time of the depressed and ill Salvador Mallo, his childhood, and his years as a filmmaker during the 1980s. The past, then, is inserted into the present through either flashbacks that the viewer believes to have been triggered by drugs or by the performance of the monologue *Adicción* (Addiction) that Salvador has written. From a psychoanalytical perspective, Shaila García Catalán and Aarón Rodríguez Serrano (2021) consider that *Pain and Glory* underlines the importance of the first desire that occurs in childhood. They claim that the film shows that the emptiness and pain experienced in the present by the body is overcome by artistic sublimation, which involves knowing how to give form to formless pain. After all, there is no glory without pain. That is, a work of art – in this case a film – can be a creation through which the author manages to inhabit the world: art as salvation (Rodríguez Serrano 2021, 98). For instance, Deleuze's analysis of Proust's *In Search of Lost Time* shows that the novel is not simply about time or memory but about apprenticeship, which is one of the revelations of art (*Deleuze* 2000 [1970]). The same can be said about *Pain and Glory*, where the first homoerotic desire is

aesthetically embellished and sublimated to make it artistically appear as important in the present as it was in the past. Nonetheless, the first desire can now only be artistically reproduced, thus highlighting that it has been lost.

The film *Pain and Glory* is in fact a nostalgic trip to the childhood of a gay man whose ageing is presented as mental and physical decline. This nostalgic return – induced by drugs – allows Salvador Mallo, the filmmaker, to regain his creativity and thus find refuge from ageing and death in the desire felt for his own art. Furthermore, the two periods in Almodóvar's film pointed out by Smith (2021) and Zecchi (2015) become the subject and form of the film by, on the one hand, presenting the absence of the festive and transgressive gay gaze; and, on the other hand, by focusing on touching (Zecchi 2015) and on sound, while privileging a static gaze by offering long-duration shots in which movement is absent and therefore resembles a painting. In fact, it can be argued that the film *Pain and Glory* is constructed as a series of fragments that reinforce the lack of the most important feature of cinema, movement, while (re)creating an imaginary past in which what is supposed to be absent in the present is present there. However, this statism and this absence would foreground Deleuze's claim that it is the present (and the future), and not the past that is important: "We write not with childhood memories but through blocs of childhood that are the becoming-child of the present" (Deleuze and Guattari 1994, 168).

Ageing: Time and Space

Already in 2016, Almodóvar expressed in a press conference at the Cannes Film Festival that he shared Phillip Roth's notion that "old age is not an illness but a massacre" (Yáñez 2016). This negative concept of ageing clearly offers a socially conformed idea of ageing as a string of ailments and pains, and consequently the medicalisation of ageing – visits to doctors, medication, and surgery – has an important role in the experience of the third and fourth ages. Ageing, then, is seen as the path to death through

a biological lens that is filled with losses. Dying, the end of existence, is the ultimate massacre of ageing.

The first consequence of this medicalisation of old age is the notion that 'any time in the past was better' than the present. The second one is that the medicalisation of old age (and the proximity of death) brings a nostalgic return to the place of his childhood, a return that is triggered by Salvador's melancholic state in the present – a state of deep sadness. However, this nostalgic journey to childhood that the film undertakes is determined by the nostalgic wish for childhood and youth themselves (Grassi and De Vita 2016). In this sense, the recollection of his childhood in Paterna is highly idealised around the figure of the mother, the brightness of sunny Paterna, the whiteness/purity of the cave houses and the experience of the first time of sexual desire.

Ageing in *Pain and Glory* is conceived in its linearity and as the pathway to death. The binary of youth versus old age is synonym to others such as active versus passive or productive versus unproductive. Therefore, even if it is only at the level of fiction, Almodóvar in this film, as I argue in the lines that follow, purposefully seeks to deconstruct time and space in order to overcome the chronicity of heteronormative time, the passing of time, the ageing process, and the unavoidable presence of death.

Jan Baars (2013), using Paul Ricoeur's concept of time, has point out that "human aging is basically living (in) time" (143) and "time slips away because we are living (in) it" (2013, 144). Chronological time has been used to measure human ageing with a beginning – birth – and an end – death – and therefore chronometric time relays on a calendar to count days, weeks, months, and years (Baars 2013, 146–147). Despite chronometric age being employed by institutions to regulate labour processes such as retirement, it does not say anything about either individual or collective peculiarities of ageing because ageing depends on biological, economic, social, racial, ethnic, gender and cultural attributes (Cruikshank 2013; Gullette 2004).

In addition to chronological time, narrativity has also been approached in its linearity. For instance, in "Narrative Time" (1980), Paul Ricoeur urged to escape the dichotomy between the chronology of se-

quence and the a-chronology of models (169). He also pointed out that narrativity and temporality are reciprocal: "Indeed, I take temporality to be that structure of existence that reaches language in narrativity and narrativity to be the language structure that has temporality as its ultimate referent" (Ricoeur 1980, 169). As an intrinsic feature of narrative, the narrative is a subjective representation of a story that can be recounted in a non-linear manner. This absence of linearity results in experiencing time in an achronological way and using memory to manipulate time. For instance, Salvador's account of his life is deployed through three narrative vehicles that problematise time linearity at the narrative level of both the film itself and in Salvador's life. These three levels are the heroin-triggered memories about his childhood in the present time, his non-drug induced memories of his middle-aged years, and the memories inscribed and narrated in the film he is finally making.

The regulatory quality of heteronormative time established by institutions characterises time by its productivity at both the workforce level and in the family space. Elizabeth Freeman (2019) explains that subjectivity is a matter of timing, a normative behaviour that allows us to master time through chrononormativity: the organisation of individuals toward maximum productivity. In addition, Halberstam (2005) has located childhood as the time in which "the conventional logics of development, maturity, adulthood and responsibility" (13) can be disturbed and therefore could offer a more fluid notion of time and gender. Childhood then, as explored by Kerry H. Robinson (2012), can be approached as a queer time and space that deploys alternative imaginings of childhood and different performances of gender. Furthermore, these alternative imaginings of childhood strongly contrast with the regulatory heteronormativity that the institutions of Catholicism, education, and the family, imposed on the child to make sure that there is a 'normal' transition from childhood to adulthood.

According to García Catalán and Rodríguez Serrano (2021), and which is of crucial importance, the structure of the film responds to the temporality of desire; a temporality that always belongs to the past and therefore can only be remembered and re-written/filmed through what

they called the eroticism of time (100). Almodóvar's film relies on the first desire to narrate Salvador's autobiography. Salvador's present ailments and pains, along with the reality of ageing, place the film director not only in a melancholic state but also in a chronicity that presents him with a dark future, that of death. The fear of ageing and death makes him travel to the past through memory and through an artistic recreation that constantly underlines the first homoerotic desire felt by Salvador when he was a child. To do so, the recreation takes place through the representation of happiness and pleasure linked, as explained later, to water, music, colour, light, writing and art.

The life of young Salvador in Paterna is surrounded by the figure of the mother and the presence of Eduardo, the mason painter. Two figures that underscore the absence of the most important institutions in his innocent childhood: family, Catholicism, and education. On the one hand, the character of the father disappears from the film as soon as the family of three moves to Paterna; and, on the other hand, Salvador has self-taught himself to write and read and will teach Eduardo. It is not until the visit of Beata – an authoritative figure dressed in black (Susi Sánchez) – that the institutions of Catholicism and education are introduced, and the life of Salvador takes a radical turn. Immediately linking *Pain and Glory* to Almodóvar's 2004 film *La mala educación* (*The Bad Education*), the boy is awarded a scholarship to attend a strict Catholic boarding school in which his voice soon attracts the attention of the priest who serves as a singing teacher. The intertextuality with *La mala educación*, as well as the swims the young boys take in the river, make the audience aware of the Catholic Church's sexual abuses that Spanish children endured during (and after) Franco's regime. This is the moment in which Salvador's innocence is lost, prompting him to initiate the passage from childhood to adulthood; a passage that brings an important change in the notion of time: from a queer time – porous and fluid – to a rigid (hetero)normative time.

The first sequences show mother and son by the river years before moving to Paterna. The next time we see mother and son together, they

are in a train station[2] in which they must spend the night before they arrive in Paterna, a town where his father has been working with the hope of leaving poverty behind. The Spanish Civil War and the colossal poverty that Spain had to endure during the first few decades of Franco's dictatorship had a huge impact on agriculture which would lead eventually to a massive exodus from the rural areas during the 1940s, which continued throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Internal migration flows from rural areas to areas in which the industry was prominent were quite frequent and massive during those decades. Paterna, a town five kilometres away from Valencia, in the 50s benefited from the construction of an industrial area thus attracting a high number of workers. At the beginning of the 20th Century, 40% of the town's population lived in caves, but in the 50s, they started to be abandoned by their inhabitants (Ayuntamiento de Paterna n.d.). The audience can assume then that Salvador's father gets one of those abandoned caves because of the poverty of the family. The dark cave is artistically turned into a lively and warm home by the mother Jacinta and the young illiterate and handsome mason painter Eduardo. However, only Salvador's eyes capture the idyllic quality of life in Paterna. In fact, Jacinta, although she clearly tries to make a home in the cave, does not hide her dislike of the place and her desire to spare Salvador a life of hardships. The impossibility of the poor to have an education impels Jacinta to send Salvador to the seminary but what the child encounters is poor education and a high level of sexual abuse at the hands of the priests.

Life before and in Paterna is therefore highly idealised by using bright colours, the radiance of the sun, the whiteness of the cave, and the beautiful singing of the women washing clothes in the river. Salvador's homosexual desire is awakened by seeing the mason painter washing himself after working on painting the cave and the light touch of their hands when he teaches Eduardo to read and write. Hence reality is presented to the viewer through Salvador's innocent young eyes, thus not showing either his family's poverty or that of those around him. In addition, men who are part of his childhood and puberty are

2 The viewer will learn at the end of the film that the train station is a filming set.

either connected to his soon-to-flourish homosexual desire (the mason painter), sexual abuse (the Catholic priests), or the absent figure of the father. By contrast, the present life of Salvador in Madrid, as well as his life looking after his mother in Madrid, are presented mainly in modern but enclosed spaces in which, despite the presence of bright colours, darkness and artificiality seem to be predominant. The river is transformed into a swimming pool; the sketch painting on cardboard by the mason painter is replaced by expensive paintings hanging on the walls by well-known artists such as Maruja Mallo – from whom Almodóvar borrows Salvador's surname – Guillermo Pérez Villalta, Sigfrido Martín Begué, and Manolo Quejido, among others. The idealised and gentle mother of his childhood is at the present of the narration dead but is the protagonist of one of the stories told in achronological order. She is in fact depicted when she is ill and aged, thus emphasising her loss and decline. This depiction of loss, in addition, is accompanied by a characterisation of the mother in the present as not gentle as the one from childhood, one that is sometimes cruel and unempathetic.[3] Salvador anticipates himself the physical and emotional deterioration of his mother, thus driving him to an antithetical emotional response to his own mother: his love for her and his rejection of her as an incarnation of ageing and death. Therefore, loss impregnates his relationship with his mother as well as his present condition as an ageing person.

Aging as Loss: Time, Space, and Identity

A life review such as the one undertaken by Almodóvar allows the ageing person not only to rememorate their own life but also to reflect on what has been lost and what has remained. In other words, the perception of ageing as loss and decline permits Mallo/Almodóvar to see both ageing and death as the greatest threat to his sense of self and therefore seeks

3 Mothers and motherhood are recurrent topics in his films. From good to bad mothers, from tyrannical mothers to servile ones.

to remain in time through the recreation of his early cinematographic pieces as a way to beat death and loss.

Salvador's perspective of loss seems to emanate from everything in his life: loss of youth, loss of physical and mental abilities, loss of health, loss of sexual drive, loss of his mother, loss of social activities, loss of creativity, and his own death as the ultimate loss. His identity as an internationally acclaimed filmmaker is accompanied, according to Salvador's chronological narrative, by the understanding and learning of the numerous ailments that after the age of thirty affected, and still affect, his body and his mind: insomnia, gastric reflux and ulcers, asthma, sciatica, all kind of muscular pains, tinnitus, sibilancies, migraines, tension headaches, back pain and back surgery, panic attacks, depression, and anxiety. Body and mental health problems define his present life and result in his loneliness and lack of creativity. The return to childhood is then triggered by the film director's need to escape his present state of pain and suffering, as well as the unavoidable closeness to death.[4]

Qingyang Zhou (2020) has pointed out that the nostalgic remembering of Salvador's childhood foregrounds an unrealistic pastoral portrayal of post-Civil War rural Spain. In this sense, and following Sara Amhed's ideas, Zhou suggests that Salvador is in fact overcoming his drug addiction and creativity impasse through the creation of a "fetishized place of no return" (Zhou 2020, n.p.) and Almodóvar's metafictional insertion of the film within a film proposes "the role of cinema to record, realize, and eternalize Salvador's memories of home and homosexuality." (Zhou 2020, n.p.) That is, Zhou (2020) considers this idealisation of childhood, and its filmic recreation, to be like those narratives of migration and estrangement examined by Ahmed and her notion of identity as movement and loss. Ahmed (1999) explains that,

> Migration involves not only a spatial dislocation, but also a temporal dislocation: 'the past' becomes associated with a home that it is

4 Interestingly, Banderas' body – despite his heart attack at the age of 56 – is quite fit and does not really match the body of someone who is suffering from so many ailments and does not exercise.

> impossible to inhabit, and be inhabited by, in the present. The question then of being at home or leaving home is always a question of memory, of the discontinuity between past and present (343).

It is therefore important to stress that ageing in its chronicity is in fact a temporal movement that accentuates loss and the discontinuity, as expressed by Ahmed, of past and present. It is precisely, as she claims, memory that emphasises discontinuity and dislocation, and generates the fragmented narrative of *Pain and Glory*. In this sense, it is important to note that all parts of Salvador Mallo's/Pedro Almodóvar's story/life are only told through texts: childhood through film; the years of La Movida through a staged monologue; the years of success through an infographic, etc. By not 'showing' a whole period of the past on the screen – early adulthood – , only 'telling' about it and only 'showing' the characters in their current state in the present – a filmmaker who cannot create due to his mental and physical ailments; an actor who cannot perform due to his addictions; and a former gay lover who has now married a woman and is a father – the film reinforces the idea of ageing as decline. This idea of decline is even more evident in the relationship with the mother: the idealisation of the mother in Salvador's nostalgic return to childhood and the reality of an older – and at some points monstrous mother – that makes Salvador face the unavoidable reality of death and dying. Furthermore, by omitting 'showing' adulthood, the film deconstructs the linearity of time: Although chronological time exists, it can be altered and manipulated within the artistic representation.

Another way to blur the chronological narrative is, as mentioned before, the use of fictional narratives within the film to evoke and depict memories. Consequently, this use of diverse fictional narratives puts into question the veracity of those memories and their rendering. Almodóvar's relentless use of his previous films as intertexts functions as a way of self-referentiality at both creative and personal levels and emphasises the imaginative and creative nature of memory. Marsha Kinder (2009) analyses Almodóvar's intertextuality as a kind of "retroseriality" that stresses not only an aspect of his filmmaking but also one that leads the viewer on how to understand the film (269). Indeed, this

same technique emerges in *Pain and Glory* referring to (and I would add *honouring*) his previous films.

Furthermore, the final sequence acquires special meaning within this context of the metafictional structure by stressing the story of Salvador's childhood we have been watching as part of older Salvador's return to his past through memory is Salvador's film. The train station in which mother and son must sleep before being able to get to Paterna is a film set. Confronted with this ending, the viewer realises that the future (filming a new movie) is no longer the future, thus breaking again with chronologic time. But the viewer also comprehends that a new layer of artistic work has been added to the structure of the film, hence emphasising memory as a construction, and underlying the aesthetic construction of reality. It can be argued that Pedro Almodóvar superimposes two thematic areas: that of the history of the person Salvador Mallo and that of the creator Salvador Mallo, thus prompting the viewer to actively participate in the film by either having to chronologically reorder the story or by rejecting to reorder the story, hence accepting a new non-heteronormative time.

The closing sequence of the film impels the viewer to understand Salvador's childhood in Paterna like the fictional narrative that Salvador Mallo, the film director, is writing and then filming. The discovery of Salvador's portrait and the inscription on it prompts Salvador to write *The First Desire* (not his love relationship with Federico or Marcelo in *Addiction*), which in fact will be the script of the film he will shoot and will be used to frame the story of transformation from pain to glory of the older Salvador. Furthermore, recreating a first desire that was never fulfilled adds another layer of idealisation that the "love of his life", Federico, lacks due to his heroin addiction. Memories are recalled with nostalgic tones, written and cinematically recreated. The ending sequence is in fact the beginning of a new stage in Salvador's identity that projects himself to a future of gain and not loss; an identity that finally does not have to nostalgically remember the past because he is making it eternally present through film. The cinematic recreation of his life is in fact a way to endlessly (re)live it and consequently transform loss into gain and glory. Cin-

ema becomes a space in which to create a fresh identity for Salvador, thus displacing ageing by generating this timeless eternity.

However, if his childhood is a film, his youth and the years as the icon of La Movida are a play, hence producing a further personal detachment from his personal/real identity and highlighting his identity as an acclaimed author/filmmaker/playwright. Salvador gives Alberto his confessional monologue *Adicción* to be performed and signed by the latter as a way to tell Salvador's life in the 1980s without being recognised by the public neither as the protagonist of the story nor its author. Hiding his identity and story behind fictional names and a fake author and performer, the monologue stresses its performative quality and hence allows the main character to emotionally detach from it once it has been written. Nevertheless, the love of his life in the 80s – Federico in the film and Marcelo in the play—is attending the play and recognises the melodramatic love story that *Adicción* narrates. This identification results in emotionally approaching the viewer of *Pain and Glory* to Salvador's story – the viewers and Alberto are the only ones aware of the real authorship of the confessional monologue. But ultimately, this identification with Salvador as the author of the story places the viewer simultaneously inside and outside the film when cinema is again central: "El amor tal vez mueva montañas, pero no basta para salvar a la persona que quieres … Yo me quedé en Madrid y el cine me salvó." (Love may move mountains, but it is not enough to save the person you love … I stayed in Madrid and the cinema saved me) (*Pain and Glory*). Now the viewer not only links the monologue to Salvador Mallo but also to Pedro Almodóvar.

Conclusion

The seventeen-century Spanish writer Pedro Calderón de la Barca had claimed in his 1636 masterpiece *La vida es sueño* (*Life Is a Dream*) that life is an illusion, a dream; that is, the only reality is to be found in the invisible and eternal. Leaving aside the philosophical overtones of Calderón's piece, *Pain and Glory* seems to be adapting the idea of the dreams to the

idea that life is cinema and cinema is just cinema.[5] This idea is reiterated in several ways throughout the film: through songs, films, paintings, etc. With regards to songs, Almodóvar employs the 1961 song *Come Sinfonia* (*Like a Symphony*) by the Italian singer Mina. This song talks about how through dreams one can get closer to the person one loves and cannot be with: "Sogno… Sogno… (I dream… I dream…) / e tu sei con me (and you are with me) / … / io vorrei, io vorrei (I would like, I would like)/ che questo sogno fosse realtà (That this dream was a reality) / Realtà d'un sogno d' amor (reality of a love dream)." Another technique used is the recurrent use of elements in the film that somehow resemble a film screen: the whiteness of sheets left to air dry, the whiteness of the cave's walls and the film screen behind Alberto's monologue in *Adicción*. In the monologue, Mallo as an author explains how in his childhood movies were played on white walls. He goes on telling the films he remembers the most: films with water. While Alberto plays this part, he evokes the waterfalls, beaches, rivers, and springs that he remembers from the films watched, and these are projected on a portable screen situated behind Alberto. These scenes of water are, in addition, accompanied by shots of big stars such as Warren Beatty and Natalie Wood in Elia Kazan's *Splendor in the Grass* (1961) and Marylin Monroe. Moreover, Anna Magnani in *Mamma Roma* (1962), by Pier Paolo Pasolini, and Sofía Loren are two of the actresses that inform both the acting of Penélope Cruz and the cinematography of José Luis Alcaide, thus making cinema even more central in terms of form and content.

All these intertexts and references to an auto-fictional past which dates back to the 1960s explain not only Mallo's imagery but Almodóvar's as well. The constant intertextuality stresses not only the artificiality of cinema, but also its agelessness. Cinema, as the artefact it is, is eternal while life is time passing; therefore, the question would be whether the art/ifice of Mallo's new film not only recreates the past, or makes it present again, but if his art becomes ageless. Otto Rank (1983), Hannah

5 The twentieth-century Spanish singer and songwriter Luis Eduardo Aute would sing in 1984: "More cinema please / that everything in life is cinema / that everything in life is cinema / and dreams cinema is."

Arendt (2013 [1958]), and Zygmunt Bauman (1998) have all discussed the links established between death and immortality by modernity. Bauman (1998) argues that the history of art is a continuous effort to go beyond the brief time of biological life; a frantic effort to eradicate the most inhuman consequences of man's mortality. However, he also acknowledges that postmodernity rejects durability and stability to favour change and flexibility and therefore postmodern men's and women's lives are organised around desires desiring to desire. That is, the eternal time is decomposed in postmodernity into a succession of fragmented episodes that are valued and justified in terms of their capacity to provide momentary satisfaction. It can be argued, going back to Halberstam's notion of the fluidity of time in childhood and the changes expressed by the notion of art between modernity and postmodernity, that *Pain and Glory* emerges as a film in which ageing as an expression of death gives voice to the struggle between the timelessness of art, the immortality of the artist, and the notion of fluid time.

Almodóvar's incessant framing and reframing of his own work and the work of others, his appropriation of the work of others through intertextuality or acting, proves that his notion of art contains the notions of art above mentioned: change, fragmentation, and recyclability allow art to be eternal thanks to being recycled. Almodóvar not only appropriates the work of Kazan, for example, when including him in his own films, but also positions himself at the same level as his predecessors and as part of the history of filmmaking. Consequently, his films are his identity; his cinematography is not only his home but also his path to immortality and glory. Pain is what makes us temporal, glory atemporal.

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