

# Analysis of amores perros

[Entertainment](#), [Movie](#)



Analysis of Amores Perros The Urban Environment of Mexico City, As Presented in Amores Perros Amores Perros represents the feature film directorial debut of Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu and was written by Guillermo Arriaga, the craftsman behind such acclaimed Hollywood successes as 21 Grams and Babel. It is perhaps no surprise then that this pairing, of inspired passion and experienced creativity, resulted in a film that won 52 of the 69 total awards for which it was nominated world-wide, including the Ariel Award for Best Picture from the Mexican Academy of Film and the Critics Week Grand Prize at the Cannes Film Festival.

But it is more than exceptional filmmaking that is responsible for the critical success of this film. Depicting the social and economic stratification of life in modern day Mexico City, Amores Perros exhibits a host of cinematic techniques whose aim is to join form to content in an effort to convey the fractured nature of, and fracturing effects on, the individual and the family that life in this particular urban environment creates. The film takes the form of a triptych, (a composition made up of three parts).

These three stories represent the three general levels of life in Mexico City. The first story explores what amounts to working class life in Mexico City. It depicts a quality of life determined by and confined within the economic limitations that are a fact of that social sphere. The second story sets itself to convey an upper class life that amounts to little more than a veneer of wealth, while the third story examines both the confined nature and the inherent freedom of the underclass of Mexico City.

But, beyond a simple explication of these disparate levels of society in this capital city, the film also strives, by the ways that it intertwines these three

<https://assignbuster.com/analysis-of-amores-perros/>

stories, to show how these levels of society are both mutually interdependent, and, ultimately, inextricable, one from the other. Story I: The Working Class The first story opens with a chaotic car chase, and we're introduced to one of this story's two main characters, Octavio, who is driving, and his dog Cofi, who is bloody in the back seat, while Octavio's friend Jorge desperately attempts to stem the bleeding, as the three flee from gun-toting thugs through the streets of Mexico City. Immediately, the turbulent, life-or-death nature of working class life in this city becomes evident. The chase ends with Octavio barreling through a red light and plowing into another car. As the story unfolds through flashbacks, we learn that Octavio has decided to give up life as a high school student to enter his dog in the local dogfights. Living at home with his mother, his unstable brother Ramiro, and his brother's wife Susana and their young infant, Octavio is driven to pursue this illicit activity by his growing infatuation with his brother's wife, and his desire to run away with Susana and make a life for them. But with no hope that his education will bring him a job by which he can support a family, Octavio sees no other choice but to fight his dog for money and hope that his newfound wealth will prove to Susana that he can be the man of a household. His choice here is the clearest summation of the way working class life is depicted in this film.

Unable to find a legal avenue to assure a financially stable life, a working class person's only recourse is to step outside of the law. Octavio's brother reaches the same conclusion only in a more extreme fashion, as dictated by his sociopathic personality. He moonlights from his job as a supermarket clerk as an armed robber whose crimes eventually get him killed. Prior to that,

though, a more subtle indictment of working class life in Mexico City is explored through the burgeoning relationship between Octavio and Susana.

Octavio is unable to recognize that he is misreading Susana's need for the comfort and understanding she is not getting from her husband for a reciprocation of his own passion, and so he becomes increasingly attached to the immediate gratification of his desire for connection that Susana represents. Having no reason to hope for the fruitfulness of any long term goals or aspirations, Octavio's immediate environment has shunt him off into a fixation upon what is immediately attainable—pursuing his brother's wife and chasing the money and increased social standing that comes with fighting his dog. It comes as no surprise to the viewer, then, that these constraints placed upon him by the particular urban environment in which he lives lead to his downfall. After succeeding wildly through a number of dogfights, Octavio has earned enough money to convince Susana that they can run away together, but he gets greedy and agrees to only last, high-stakes fight against a dog owned by the local gang leader, who has been Octavio's constant nemesis and antagonist.

Octavio descends to his lowest point, though, when at the same meeting where he agrees to this final fight, he contracts with the ringleader of the dogfights to assault his brother, who, as a result, is nearly beaten to death. This choice backfires on Octavio, as Susana is now compelled to flee with her husband, taking with her all the money Octavio and Cofi had won. This shows that working class life in Mexico City often produces in people aims which will only exacerbate their situation. Learning of the betrayal, Octavio is

outraged and is forced to scramble together his remaining money to fund the bet of the final fight.

At the fight, Cofi once again takes the upper hand against the gang leader's dog. The thug is prepared for him this time, and pulls out a gun and shoots the dog. As Jorge scrambles to carry the bleeding animal to their car, Octavio lashes out and stabs the gang leader in the gut, initiating the car chase that opens the film. The first story ends on the seminal car crash, and we jump back in time again to be introduced to the main characters of the second story, Daniel and Valeria. Story II: Upper Class Life This middle story depicts upper class life in Mexico City in a way that puts its superficiality and frivolousness front and center.

If the essence of working class life—its chaotic and dangerous nature—is symbolized by the car chase that opens the film, the fact that the first scene of the second story consists of Valeria, a high fashion model, being interviewed on a morning talk show, pretending to be in a relationship with a soap opera star, is a clear indication of the artificial and cosmetic nature of celebrity life in Mexico City. The problems of the upper class, like those of the working class as explored in the first story, play a central role in the second story, but they are problems of a completely different order.

Daniel, a successful magazine editor, is committing adultery with Valeria. Whereas in the first story the father is absent altogether, in this story Daniel's relative wealth allows him to support both his family and the purchase of an upscale apartment for himself and Valeria. But, as he makes the choice to leave his family for his mistress, the facade of wealth begins to crumble. The veneer-like quality of wealth in Mexico City is conveyed in

clearly when, shortly after moving into their new apartment, Valeria puts her foot through the pristine-looking parquet floor.

It is conveyed explicitly when, as we learn that it was Valeria who was driving the car Octavio hit in the scene that opened the film and who is now in a wheelchair with a badly fractured leg, Daniel becomes frantic over his financial situation. As it turns out, Valeria had no insurance, and so, between his mortgage, the cost of their new apartment, and Valeria's medical bills, Daniel begins to doubt his choice to stay with Valeria. But this is where a clear difference between the upper class and the working class, as represented in this film, begins to become obvious.

While the actions of the characters in the first story seem almost inevitable due to their economic situation, Daniel's relative wealth allows him some means of freedom to choose how he is to act. His financial burdens may, and do, create great stress for him, but he has the means to make his decisions upon moral grounds instead of merely upon financial considerations. So whereas Octavio is driven to fight his dog by his need for money in order to possess Susana, Daniel, after flirting with the idea to abandon Valeria and return to his wife, in the end chooses to remain with his new love.

He may have revealed his moral weakness by leaving his family in the first place, but he shows some ability to act ethically when he decides to commit himself to his decision to join his life to Valeria's, instead of leaving her in her time of greatest need. The film conveys this choice as one allowed him, in great part, by his financial situation. Story III: El Chivo The third, and final, story explores the life of a member of the upper class, and transient named El Chivo who works as a hitman for the corrupt police force.

Living in squalor with only his dogs as companions, El Chivo represents, by his physical appearance, the decrepit state of members of this class of society in Mexico City. As his story unfolds, though, we learn that his tale is not one of perennial poverty—he is a fallen man. Giving him an origin of normality and respectability conveys the tragic nature of members of this underclass—their current state of abject poverty is a result of flaws in their character. On the contrary, El Chivo left his family to fight in some unnamed ideological quest—he wanted to save the world.

Having failed at that, he has fallen in cynicism and exploits the freedom and lack of accountability for his actions that his life on the outskirts of society allows him to become a murderer for hire. His perspective is changed, though, upon seeing the obituary for his wife in the paper. He attends the funeral, slinking on the periphery. When he sees the daughter he chose to leave when she was only a child, he feels compelled to find some measure of redemption that would allow him to become a part of her life again.

He gives up his life as a gun-for-hire, bathes and shaves for seemingly the first time in years, and, as he walks off into the proverbial sunset to close the film, the viewer gets a clear sense that El Chivo, contrary to appearances, is the one least constrained by his economic situation. While the characters of the first two stories were driven, in some part, by economic considerations, El Chivo's greatest desire is to find the moral and ethical ground that would make him worthy of reconnecting with his daughter.

While Octavio is driven by immature passion, and Daniel is led by his wandering heart, El Chivo searches for the firm ground of morality upon which to stand. His desire is only for redemption, and by this desire he is

redeemed. Part IV: Greater than the Sum of its Parts Such clear and intricately constructed depictions of the stratified layers of life in Mexico City would amount to little more than three separate stories if they weren't connected by equally clear and intricate means.

The filmmakers were interested not merely in showing these layers in isolation, but in weaving them into a cohesive whole that would mirror the actual situation in this modern city. This is done in several ways, both structurally, and through plot. First, the writer took inspiration for the structure of the film from William Faulkner's *Light in August*, which is also told through three loosely connected stories. *Amores Perros* makes heavy use of flashbacks and flash forwards to intertwine the stories into a single film.

The writer also used the technique of hyperlinking, which he exploited in his films *21 Grams* and *Babel* as well. This technique consists of introducing one character slowly, and often mysteriously, over the course of the film, and building up his or her story until it is fully revealed in the final, climatic scenes. This is done with the character El Chivo, and the effect is further enhanced by the director's choice to shoot the early scenes with El Chivo using a telephoto lens, so that the viewer is kept at a distance from this seminal character.

He shows up in each of the first two stories, but it isn't until it is time to tell his story that the viewer actually is allowed some intimacy with this character. These stories are intertwined through plot as well; namely, through the traumatic experience of the car crash. By the time we get to the third story, we know that it was Octavio who was driving the car responsible



for the crash, that it was Valeria who was driving the car that was hit, and that it was El Chivo who was present at the scene to rescue Cofi, who had been left to die on the side of the road by the paramedics.

As the writer said in the commentary track for the film, “ Crashes are horrible, life-altering events, but they serve to bring people together who otherwise would never have met. ” It is trauma that, among other things, connects all three of the layers of society as represented in this film; no one is free from pain. Finally, these three stories are linked thematically. One theme that links all three stories is that of the absentee father. For the working class family, the absence of the father makes no mention—he is just gone.

In the second story, we watch as the father decides to leave his family, and in the third, we see the father’s sincere desire to return to his family. This is the most significant emotional arch of the film—the redemption of the father. First, we have the wreckage left behind in the wake of his abandonment, the bitter nature of the brothers Octavio and Ramiro, a pain whose source is buried deep under the surface. Then we see the crime being committed, as Daniel leaves his family, and the viewer is allowed to feel the anger and outrage produced by the father’s abandonment, and, more importantly, we can link that pain to its proper cause.

Finally, we are positioned within the perspective of the father, El Chivo, and are allowed to feel his own pain and experience the authenticity of his own desire to atone for abandoning his family. It is this progression that, ultimately, drives this film. A theme closer to the surface, and more sentimental in nature, which also connects these three stories, is a love of

<https://assignbuster.com/analysis-of-amores-perros/>

dogs. Cofi is Octavio's best friend and is responsible for whatever pleasure his master is able to gain from his surroundings through being forced to participate in dog fighting. The dog Richie is Valeria's constant companion.

He falls into the hole in the floor that Valeria accidentally created and is trapped under the floor of the couple's apartment for the better part of their story. With Valeria languishing in the hospital after having suffered a thrombosis, Daniel, in the penultimate scene of the second story, decides to tear up the floor to rescue the dog. As he pulls Richie out of the hole he has created, his is symbolically rescuing his and Valeria's relationship. Finally, El Chivo's dogs are his best friends and, until he rediscovers his desire to be with his family, they are the only connection he has left to his humanity.

His humanity is put to the test when, after rescuing Cofi from the aftermath of the crash and nursing him back to health, Cofi kills every last one of his dogs. He moves to kill Cofi in retaliation, to act out an impotent and meaningless revenge. But, because he has seen his daughter at his wife's funeral, his humanity has already begun to awaken and he is compelled to let Cofi live, so that he is there with El Chivo, man and man's best friend, to walk off into the sunset that brings on the closing credits. In the American release, the film's title was translated as, " Love is a bitch. This title is in some ways relevant to the movie—none of the characters manage to find unqualified happiness. But, according to Wikipedia, the director gave an interview to NPR where he expressed dissatisfaction with the use of this English idiom as the title for his film. For him, " Amores" expresses everything that is good about life, while " Perros" expresses life's wretchedness. In this sense, the title could be viewed as meaning, "

Sometimes you win, sometimes you lose," which captures the highs and lows that each set of characters experiences.