

Amores perros (Alejandro González Iñárritu, 2000)

The director made the movie viewers' 'voyeur' experience very direct in at least three occasions when we peek in people's private lives and acts through windows.

- ? We look at the scene of the 'homeless' guy's having rum with milk through dirty and compartelized windows. He seems to be void of emotions being content with his life and choice of drink.
- ? Parts of one of the dog fighting scenes are shot from behind and over the shoulders of the crowds. Emphasizing its illegal nature.
- ? After their first fight Daniel is shown sleeping on the couch of the posh apartment he bought for her lover. We see him through window shades as an embodiment of loneliness despite being in a relationship.

There are two montages that could be individual video clips for the accompanying music. There are no dialogs during these segments and they contain lots of intercuts. One of them combines into one coherent piece the actions of various characters including the dog fight, drugstore robbing, screwing - sorry for the choice of words, but I cannot call that act lovemaking - in the storage of the supermarket, selecting and buying a car from the money won with the dogfight. The overall effect is that we see the connections, how all these happening are interrelated.

The other montage shows us Octavio's lovemaking to his sister-in-law – mostly as reflections in a mirror intercut with the hit men beating up his brother per his instructions. An other nice example of what a difference it makes if we know what goes on at the same time in different spaces. Octavio knows and (ab)uses it to his advantage. But at the end of the segment he asks Susana: "Are you scared?" Then he looks into the camera, aka into our eyes. This evoked quite a mixed set of emotions in me (as intended I guess.) In general he has beautiful eyes, full of love. It was a slow process to learn that it is already a deception, because he is quite a cold hearted macho hoodlum who despite his good intentions can commit cruel acts. Thus, yes, I was scared when he asked me.

It's not particularly difficult to figure out at least one of the messages of the movies from its title and the song that we can hear 2 or three times with this lyric (original is in Spanish of course, this is the English subtitle):

"Stop the deception, don't try to hide."

All the characters deceit someone. Mostly themselves but often others. And what does it get them in their life. More pain than they started out with or death.

When Octavio and his friend take the dog to its final fight they were watching TV. They don't turn it off so it keeps on going and we the movie viewers see a day time interview with the model, who loses her leg later on. But the interesting part for me was the effect of seeing a TV on in empty room. Reminds me of the question does a tree make a sound when it falls in the forest and nobody is there. Similarly TV programming has a life on its own, that we may view or not, can decide to relate to it or not, but it keeps on going nevertheless. What for?

The homeless guy is not really homeless as he has a place to live. But what makes a home home: family. He doesn't have that. And that's his heart desires the most, the family he lost. It is quite ironic that he ends up having money that he doesn't really want and passes to his daughter. He does have a substitute family, his dogs. He being the virtual underdog of the society takes care of the real dogs. But they are killed by the latest arrival who he helped back to life. He learned the hard way the lesson that "there is nothing more important than to be with his daughter". Losing his family and then his substitute family was the real punishment for the crime he was sentenced to jail for 20 years (bombing a mall.) The penultimate scene of the movie, when he talks onto his daughter's answering machine reminded me of Jarmusch's Dead Man. He acknowledged that he is a dead man, in his own words: "a living ghost". Now that I think of it even the film score reminded me of Neil Young's fading in and out style.

The apartment and the relationship of Daniel and Valeria both were built on rats. The first literally the second figuratively, by breaking up an existing and apparently functioning family. In this trio they play with calling each other and not saying anything in the phone. But those who have an emotional connection feel who is on the other end of the line. The way this shifts tells us who is thinking of whom. Rats. The heart shaped balloon that spelled "I Love you" and deflates scene by scene and sinks further down is a nice symbol of what's going on between Daniel and Valeria.