

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
Cosma Ioana, PhD

Love 1. Dog / Dragoste 1. Câine (2018)

FLORIN ȘERBAN

Contents (Overview-Synopsis-Characters-Character Analysis-Themes-Scenes)

OVERVIEW

Auteur Florin Șerban a Romanian New Wave film director who was born in Reșița, Romania, in 1975. He graduated with a BA in Philosophy and has an MA in Philosophy of Culture and Hermeneutics from Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca. He has a BFA in film directing from UNATC in Bucharest. After this, he moved to the US. He has an MFA in film directing from Columbia University/ He graduated from Columbia University in NYC with an MFA in Film Directing. With his first feature film, "If I Want to Whistle, I Whistle", he received the Grand Jury Prize at 2010 Berlinale together with the Alfred Bauer Prize for Innovation in Cinema.

Film *Love 1. Dog* was written and directed by Florin Șerban. It premiered in 2018 at The International Film Festival in Sarajevo where it won the Cineuropa and the Art Cinema awards. The movie is a drama and a love story between Irina, a young city-dweller, and Simion, a middle-aged mountaineer who lives alone. It premiered in Romania on December 5, 2018. The movie uses long shots of beautiful mountain landscapes and painting-like shots of the characters. The main actors are Valeriu Andriuță, as Simion, and Cosmina Stratan, as Irina.

Background The movie was filmed in the Piatra Craiului mountains in Romania. In this mountainous landscape, we witness scenes of a rare beauty. The title of the movie could be taken to reflect on the type of love Simion has for Irina – visceral, haunting, instinctive. It also alludes to the protective nature of the dog in the movie, who gets attached to Irina and tries to take care of her. In this way, Simion's love is both protective and violent. The dog personifies his master, and the story has to be perceived from the perspective of this bond between man and animal.

SYNOPSIS

Simion, a middle-aged forest keeper living alone in the mountain, finds the unconscious body of a young woman one day. Since his father's death, Simion has lived alone with just his dog as a companion. Simion takes the woman to his home and treats her wounds. There are signs of severe beatings all over her body, but she has nothing broken. Simion treats her wounds, feeds her and keeps her in his home after she says she does not want to go to the village. As the woman, Irina, recovers slowly, a rapport forms between the two, even though they are very different. She is an independent city dweller with a love for the mountain and he is an estranged man who is not sociable and lives alone. However, little by little, they grow closer until one time when they climb up the mountain and have sex. In the meantime, Simion has been investigating the crime. He first suspects it was his acquaintance, the mountain guide, but realizes that the guide is not guilty. Then a young man appears at Simion's house. Simion identifies the young man as the perpetrator of the crime because his tobacco box matches the cigarette case found by Irina's side in the forest. Simion goes after the young man and shoots him dead. Irina realizes Simion's intentions of killing Mircea and leaves him for good.

CHARACTERS

Simion – a middle-aged forest keeper

Irina – a young woman

Mircea – a young man

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Simion

Simion is the main character in the movie. He is a middle-aged man who lives alone in the mountains. He is a traditional and dominant man. He is antisocial and does not communicate with the people living in the nearby village. At times, he is kind, as he is with Irina; other times, he is immensely cruel.

Dominant Simion is the type of dominant man who wants to impose his will on other people, especially if they are women. With Irina, he sets the rules from the start and does not condone any transgression of these rules. When he realizes that Irina has given her food to his dog, he goes and beats the dog. Simion's will must prevail at all times.

Traditional Simion is also a very traditional man. In his view, women should wear women's clothes; he buys Irina a skirt and a kerchief saying that this is what a woman should wear. His view is that the man should command in the house and the woman should obey him and be submissive.

Serious Simion is dead serious all the time. He does not like Irina's jokes and never laughs when she says one. Once, he tries to tell a joke but it is so bad that Irina is not amused and he gets mad. In all other situations he is very serious.

Kind Simion has some type of kindness in him. He rescues Irina when he finds her unconscious in the woods and tends to her wounds. He receives her in his home, although he had lived alone for a very long time. When Irina asks him not to take her to the village, he eventually agrees to keep her in his home until she recovers.

Cruel At other times, Simion is cruel. When he thinks that injustice has been done, he goes all the way to punish it as he does by killing Mircea. Before killing Mircea, Simion asked him to take a stone in his hand and hit his own face, as he thinks Mircea must have done with Irina.

Antisocial Simion is antisocial. He has only one acquaintance but, when he suspects him of having abused Irina, Simion attacks him. With the shopkeeper, his dialogue is curt and to the point. We do not see him socialize with anybody else (except for Irina).

Irina

Irina is a young woman from the city who has gone alone on a trip to the mountains. There she gets beaten and raped. Irina is adventurous, aware and friendly.

Adventurous Irina has some sense of adventure since she has the initiative to go in the mountain on her own. She is also adventurous in her communication with Simion, mocking and poking fun at him all the time. Her sense of adventure stems from her independence and we see this at the end of the movie when she leaves Simion for good.

Aware Irina is aware of Simion's infatuation with her. However, she does not take it seriously and makes jokes and ridicules Simion for it most of the time preceding their love-making. She teases Simion when they go in the mountain for his possessivity and jealousy that Simion seems to be unaware of.

Friendly Irina is friendly and has a greater social sense than Simion. She is kind and goodwilled. She prepares a meal of polenta for Simion and waits for him the whole night long. She opens up to Simion but not enough to tell him what had happened to her. She speaks well and her replies are witty.

THEMES

Culture The movie presents two opposing cultures – city versus country – through its characters, Irina and Simion. Irina, who comes from the city, represents the good and relatively safe life of city-dwellers. Simion, who has lived isolated in the mountains for the past fourteen years, represents the country culture, with all its traditional ways. Irina is amused and, at the same time, attracted by Simion's traditional way of perceiving the world. Simion, on his side, feels excited by the prospect of being with a city girl, as he confesses to the mountain guide. Irina embodies good taste – such as the socks Simion finds in the shop, which were actually Irina's – emancipation and beauty. Simion personifies patriarchy, manliness and

solitude, which are found in remote Romanian villages. While Irina inspects Simion's objects in his house, Simion looks for, and finds, traces of Irina – a boot, for instance – in the mountain. The two cultures intersect when Irina moves in with Simion. Irina begins to dress like Simion and then like a woman from the country. We learn that Simion used to live in the city but left it because he did not get along with the people living there. The two cultures overlap until the country culture of Simion takes over the city culture of Irina.

Patriarchy The theme of patriarchy is present in the movie through Simion's traditional ways. He is a forest guard who hunts and eats what he hunts and grows. When he meets Irina, he imposes himself by examining (expertly) her to see if she has anything broken. He is the one who makes the rules and makes sure Irina obeys them. When she does not, such as when she feeds the dog, consequences ensue, and the dog is beaten. Simion poses as an 'authentic' man and imposes on Irina the framework of a 'real' woman who has to dress in women's clothes. Then, he takes her out to the mountain allegedly as a favor because she is supposed to like hiking. But Irina contradicts him and says he has taken her there to show her what a good mountain-climber he is and in order to rescue her over and over again. The first time Irina wants to run away, he yells at her that she will not get rid of him so easily. Then he absents himself from home the whole night, while Irina waits for him (like a married country woman) with the polenta she had prepared for them. Irina succumbs to Simion's patriarchal ways and she offers to make love to him. However, when she realizes he is about to kill Mircea, she flees for good.

Crime There are several crimes in the movie: the crime perpetrated on Irina, who has been beaten and probably raped; the beating of the dog; and the murder of Mircea by Simion. We do not know anything about what happened to Irina, except for the traces of beating left on her skin. She has been severely beaten and she can barely talk and eat. Towards the end, we find out that Mircea is the one who beat Irina, but we do not know the circumstances or the context in which that happened. Then, there is the beating of the dog by Simion. It is a cruel, senseless act whose violence probably perplexes the viewer unused to the ways of Romanian villagers with their animals. Irina reacts accordingly and screams when she hears the dog being beaten. Lastly, there is the murder of Mircea by Simion. It is a murder in cold-blood; Simion follows Mircea up to Omu mountain top in order to kill him. Before shooting him dead, Simion asks Mircea to take a stone and hit his head the same way he may have done with Irina. This crime is explained by Simion in his traditional way of thinking: if a wolf has killed a mountain goat, it will do it again. Therefore, his crime is justified in his eyes.

Investigation/Search Simion does his own investigation of the crime perpetrated on Irina. First, he finds her missing boot and a cigarette case by an extinguished fire place in the forest. Then he goes to the shop to inquire about Irina and learns that she had been guided to the mountain by his friend, Gheorghe. Simion takes Gheorghe to the woods and admonishes him, by pointing his shotgun at him, to admit he has beaten and raped Irina. Frightened, Gheorghe denies everything. After this, Simion says he was only joking. When Mircea arrives at Simion's house, Simion notices that Mircea's tobacco box matches the cigarette case he had found by the fire place in the forest. Simion then infers that it is Mircea who has beaten Irina. Simion checks on Mircea and Irina to see if they talk to each other when he leaves them alone to bring back more cheese. When he is left alone with Mircea, he asks Mircea if he is a criminal and Mircea says he isn't. However, just based on the cigarette case and his irrational jealousy, Simion decides that it is Mircea who has beaten Irina and makes up his mind to kill him. Simion's search goes hand in hand with his growing attraction for Irina, until it becomes irrational and compulsive.

Violence There is some violence in the film, in particular because of Simion's excessive macho thinking. While we do not see the actual beating of Irina, we see marked traces of it on her face which has been almost disfigured by the beating. Simion is a violent man and he acts violently with Irina when she mocks him for having fallen in love with her. When she feeds the dog, he beats the dog and we hear the dog squealing. He acts violently with his friend, Gheorghe, when he suspects him of having raped Irina. And, he does the same with Mircea, whom he murders not before asking him to hit himself in the head with a stone several times. The violence in the movie shows that Simion is an unstable man, who is capable of murder and crime. The violence in the movie reminds us of the dangerous ways of people living in isolation in the Romanian mountains.

Attraction Simion is physically attracted to Irina from the first moment he sees her. After he checks up on her to see if she has anything broken, he goes to the woods and masturbates. He is a sexually

deprived man, having lived alone for the past fourteen years. He confesses to Gheorghe that, during this time, he has not been with any woman. Simion's physical attraction to Irina then manifests as frustration and aggression when he thinks that she is mocking him for desiring her. When she slaps him, he shouts out at her that she will not be able to get rid of him and holds on to her arms tightly. He then punishes Irina for her mockery and does not come home for a whole night. When Irina gives in to him and takes her clothes off in front of him, he is ready and receives her gratefully. He then is tender to her and sleeps with her the night Mircea arrives at his house. He simply holds her in his arms. Irina is also physically attracted to Simion, but we do not know if her act of love-making is one of gratefulness towards her benefactor or her own physical attraction to him. In the movie, physical attraction appears as tense, as an act of desire of having what one does not possess.

Caring Simion is very caring towards Irina. First, he rescues her from the forest where he has found her beaten and unconscious. When she wakes up, he asks her if she wants to go to the village but she refuses. He also asks what has happened to her, but she does not want to say and he does not insist. Although he hates the smell of faeces in his house, he allows Irina to use the pot inside the house, knowing that his dog might attack her should she go out of the house. However, Irina becomes friends with the dog by giving him bits of food through the window, which is also an act of caring. Simion also buys women's clothes for Irina in order for her to dress properly, 'as a woman', in his own words. After they make love and Mircea arrives, he goes to Irina's bedside and lays by her side, holding her in his arms. Simion is a caring man but his patriarchal, atavistic ways turn him into a brute and ruin everything. Irina also shows her caring for Simion by cooking polenta for him and waiting for him by the lamp light all night long. The caring shown in the movie might seem in opposition with the violence, but actually the two compliment each other.

Alienation/Loneliness Simion is a lonely man who lives in isolation. For two years he lived with his father until the latter died and then the next twelve years he lived alone in the mountain far from any human dwelling. His only friend is Gheorghe, who is a mountain guide. In the past, Simion used to live in the city but it did not work out for him as he did not like the people and the people did not seem to like him. He confesses to Irina that he was scared of living in the city. When he finds Irina, his home and ways are troubled by the new presence, who is very different from him and mysterious. It disquiets him and he begins investigating, searching and asking questions. He is both caring and aggressive towards her, like a man who does not know very well how to treat other people, and a woman in particular. His home is far off in the mountains and the only being who lives there is his dog. The relationship between Simion and his dog is one of commander/servant, however. We see them play together in one scene at the beginning of the movie; but the rest of the time, Simion treats his dog coldly and even cruelly. At the end, when Irina leaves him for good, Simion remains alone again with his dog.

Otherness Irina represents the other for Simion, as he does for her. Not only is she a stranger from the city, but Simion does not know anything about the context of her beating. Moreover, she is a woman and Simion is unsure of how he should treat a woman. In the same way, Simion is utterly different from what Irina has known in the past (judging by the look of Mircea): he is rough, determinate, extremely masculine and patriarchal. In spite of her small insubordinations, Simion dominates Irina most of the movie by his sheer force and by ruggedness. Irina inspects Simion's belongings and finds several weapons and other things which are common in the mountains. On the verandah of the house, Mircea exclaims that he is shocked that Irina would stay in the same house with someone who owns a gun. So, we can infer that Irina is peaceful and serene, while Simion is troubled and violent.

Jealousy Jealousy is the trigger for the tragedy in the movie. Simion is jealous of Irina, of her past life, her independence and her previous lover. When Simion realizes that Mircea is her previous lover and that he might lose her to Mircea, Simion becomes irrational and decides to kill his opponent. Jealousy torments Simion the whole night Mircea spends time under his roof. First, Simion spies on Irina and Mircea's conversation from a safe distance, looking for signs of closeness between them. He then is unable to sleep on the verandah he shares with Mircea. When he realizes that the tobacco box found at the place where Irina had been beaten is Mircea's, Simion decides that Mircea is a criminal - a raging wolf, he says - and decides to kill him. That night, he goes to sleep at Irina's side, holding her protectively (and possessively) in his arms. We could infer from all these events that the motive for the crime is actually

Simion's jealousy and possessiveness. Jealousy blinds Simion into murder and he acts impulsively based on this irrational fear and need for possessing Irina completely.

Adventure Although it is mostly a static movie, there is adventure, mainly due to the wild spirit of the protagonists. There are fights between Irina and Simion and an invisible fight between Irina and Mircea, as well as the killing of Mircea by Simion. Irina is an adventurous woman, who has ventured alone into the wild mountains of Romania and does not seem to fear anything until something really bad happens to her. But her temper remains volcanic and she responds bravely and determinately to all of Simion's rough reactions. She remains unafraid until the end and she leaves Simion when she realizes he had set out to murder Mircea. Simion's life, although more peaceful, is adventurous. Too. as life in the mountains involves being confronted with all sorts of dangerous situations. Simion is well equipped (and armed) for them and he knows how to deal with accidents and mishaps. He knows how to deal with Irina's problem swiftly and efficiently so that she will become cured as soon as possible. However, of the two, it is Irina who is the more adventurous, which drives Simion insane.

SCENES

SIMION WITH HIS DOG IN THE WOODS A middle-aged man named Simion is walking in the woods alone with his dog. It is a mountain landscape, which is quite beautiful. The man and the dog have a good bond and the two play for a while together.



SIMION IS HAVING A MEAL After a long walk in the forest, Simion and his dog stop to rest. Simion lights up a fire and cooks what appear to be animal organs. He eats them.



THE OTHER WALK IN THE WOODS The next day, Simion departs from his home – a house in the middle of the forest – and goes to the woods again. This time, Simion takes his mule with him too.



SIMION RETURNS HOME Simion is back home but this time he is carrying the unconscious body of a young woman. He takes the young woman into his house and sits her on a bed.



THE YOUNG WOMAN After a while, the young woman wakes up but is unable to move or speak. She simply lies inert on the bed, staring somewhere above her head.



THE CHECK-UP Simion goes and checks on the young woman, whose name is Irina. He minutely investigates her body for signs of broken bones. Simion tells Irina that he wants to take her to the village, but Irina refuses. She also refuses to say what has happened to her. There are signs of harsh beating all over her body.



THE PLACE WHERE IRINA WAS FOUND Simion goes back to the place where he'd found Irina. He finds her missing boot and other signs of her passing there. He touches them each and then masturbates there.



SIMION'S HOUSE While Simion is away, Irina gets up from her bed. She starts to investigate the house and finds objects which reveal Simion's occupation, that of a forest keeper. She also touches each object she sees. She does not get out of the house because Simion had warned her about his dog who might bite her, should she go out.



SIMION BEATS HIS DOG When Simion returns home, he starts to eat and has a conversation with Irina. Simion learns that Irina has fed the dog (through the window) the meat he had left for her to eat. Simion does not say anything but takes his club and goes out and beats the dog.



IRINA OPPOSES SIMION FOR THE FIRST TIME Realizing Simion's intention, Irina tries to prevent Simion from going out and screams at him not to beat the dog. However, Simion does not listen and she is left alone in the house, sad and helpless.

SIMION GOES TO THE VILLAGE SHOP The next day, Simion goes to the village shop to buy some clothes for Irina. He asks the shopkeeper if she had seen a young woman the previous day. The shopkeeper says she did and that she was accompanied by the local mountain guide (a friend of Simion's)



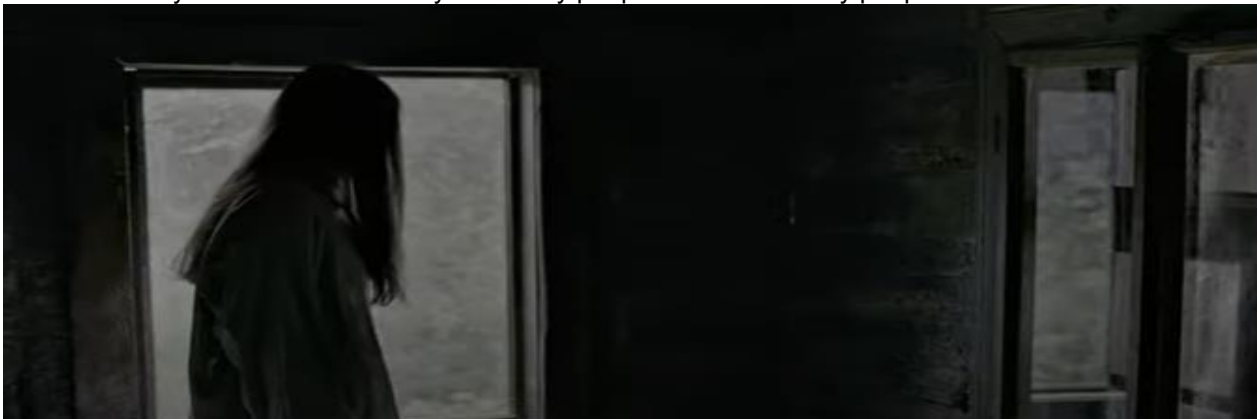
IRINA BEFRIENDS THE DOG The dog, whose name is Dog, becomes more attached to Irina as she keeps on throwing food for him out of the house window. Seeing this, Irina dares to go out and the dog is very happy to see her indeed.



THE MOUNTAIN GUIDE Simion meets with the mountain guide in the forest. Simion starts telling the mountain guide about how he'd found Irina. He then drills the mountain guide on whether he'd met her. As the guide denies this, Simion takes his shotgun and points it to him asking if he has raped and beaten Irina. The mountain guide denies everything and Simion releases him.



THE DINNER CONVERSATION Back at Simion's home, Irina and Simion have dinner outside the house at night. Simion starts telling personal things to Irina, such as about the time when he was a city-dweller. He says he didn't like the city or the city people and that the city people did not like him.



SIMION'S TORMENT That night, as Irina is sleeping in bed, Simion is lying awake on the floor where he is supposed to sleep. He is troubled by something and keeps fretting. Irina wakes up temporarily and witnesses Simion's torment.



IRINA AND SIMION HAVE A FIGHT The next day, Irina teases Simion about his infatuation with her. This enrages Simion, who pushes Irina and grabs her arm telling her she won't be able to get away from him. Simion then leaves the house.



IRINA WAITS FOR SIMION As she had promised the previous night, Irina cooks polenta for Simion. She waits for him alone at the table, by candle light. However, Simion does not return that night and Irina does not fall asleep until very late.



SIMION RETURNS HOME At last, Simion returns home the next day. He brings with him what he calls “woman’s clothes” for Irina. He gives her a skirt and a kerchief. They make up silently.



THE MOUNTAIN CLIMB Simion and Irina then go climbing up the mountain. While Simion is skilled and trained, Irina is not as resilient. However, they manage to reach the crest. There they sit for a while on the edge of a cave.



IRINA AND SIMION MAKE LOVE As they go out of the cave Simion takes off his shirt. Irina then takes all of her clothes off and goes to Simion. They have sex.



THE STRANGER Back at Simion's house, at night, there is a young man who is having dinner outside with Simion and Irina. Simion and the stranger talk, but Irina does not say a word.



THE STRANGER AND IRINA Simion leaves the two alone to bring back more food, which both have requested. However, Simion watches them from a distance from behind the curtains of the house. Irina and the young man seem to talk to each other now.



SIMION AND THE YOUNG MAN HAVE A CONVERSATION When Irina has gone to bed, the two men are left alone to talk and smoke on the porch. Simion notices that the young man's cigarette case handle matched the cigarette box he'd found where he had found Irina lying unconscious in the woods. Simion does not say anything but he is again unable to sleep and goes back in the house.



SIMION AND IRINA SLEEP TOGETHER Simion goes by Irina's side and takes her in his arms, protectively. He is unable to sleep for a while. The next morning, when he wakes up, the stranger is gone, probably to the top of the mountain as he said he would.



SIMION'S DECISION When Irina wakes up, she finds Simion with his shotgun in his hand. Simion says there is a bad wolf roaming about and he is going to kill it, since the wolf has killed once will probably do it again.



SIMION KILLS THE YOUNG MAN Simion finds the young man from the previous night and points his gun at him. Simion then asks him to take a stone in his hand and hit his own head with it. The young man obeys. Simion then shoots the young man dead.



IRINA LEAVES SIMION Realizing that the wolf story is but code for killing the young man, Irina flees Simion's house. When Simion returns, he finds only the dog waiting for him on the porch.

