

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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LOVE 2. AMERICA / Dragoste 2. America (2018)

FLORIN ȘERBAN

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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, where he obtained an MFA in film directing from Columbia University, NYC. 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 The movie is a beautiful love drama which develops in a non-chronological fashion. It premiered on September 11th 2018 in Romania, and received The Best Image Award at The Gopo Awards (Romania's Oscars), where it was also nominated for Best Staging, Best Actor, Best Sound and Best Original Soundtrack. The film is the second part of the Love Trilogy directed by Florin Șerban. The movie's beauty is enhanced not only by the tragic love story, but also by the beautiful scenery and music. In the movie, the credits and sections in the film appear with images of drawings by Leonardo da Vinci. The movie title alludes to the country where the main character, Anton, wants to immigrate and also to the American dream of people living in Romania during communism.

Background *Love 2. America* was produced by Fantascope Films, The East Company and Correct Media. It showcases an excellent cast of Igor Babiac, as Anton, Emoke Pal, as Beatrice and Constantin Dogioiu as David. The movie is seventy-five minutes long and it was shot in Secu, near Reșița, Romania. Reșița is also Florin Șerban's birth place. The director clearly wanted to present the beauty of the landscape surrounding his home town and we are treated to some breathtaking images of the nearby forest. The movie only vaguely references its time and place, but we realize that time and place are crucial for the tragic ending of the love story between Anton and Beatrice.

SYNOPSIS

Love 2. America is a love story of Anton and Beatrice. It develops during their day together, with flashbacks, forwarding and might-have-beens. Anton and Beatrice have been together since their college years as philosophy students; then they separated and Beatrice married another man, David, a friend of Anton's. But the love between Anton and Beatrice was so great that they got back together again, having an affair during Beatrice's marriage with David. The conflict is triggered by the fact that Anton decides to leave the country for good. This means that he and Beatrice will be separated. Beatrice tries to convince Anton that he cannot live without her that she is 'life for him', but it is in vain and he does not give up on his dream of leaving the country. Anton is to travel to another country on a boat hidden in a shipping container. This implies that it is forbidden to leave the country, so it must have been during the communist era in Romania. This also means that leaving the country is highly dangerous: should Anton be caught, he would be shot on the spot. As David carries on with his project of leaving the country, Beatrice keeps telling him about her great love for him and, although Anton does not verbalize his feelings as much as Beatrice, we can tell from his actions and look on his face that he loves her very much, too. Eventually, he asks her to join him and she reluctantly accepts. However, in the end, she does not show up on the train platform where Anton is waiting for her, but instead remains in her home with her husband.

CHARACTERS

Anton – a young man
Beatrice – a young woman
David – Beatrice's husband

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Anton

Anton is a former philosophy student who wants to leave the country. He is in love with Beatrice. He is adventurous and unconventional and he does not seem to fit in the country (rule by a communist government). He is unhappy because he is leaving Beatrice for good. It is his lack of stability that makes him make decisions that impact his happiness.

Adventurous Anton is an adventurous man. He is about to embark on a boat to travel at night outside of Romania in secrecy. This represents great danger, as any man caught doing this, would be killed on the spot. But Anton is willing to take this risk because his need for freedom is greater.

Unconventional Anton is not a very conventional man. He has an affair with a married woman; he does not have a home; he refuses to live in a totalitarian country; and he is willing to leave Beatrice despite of the fact he loves her. He does not seem aware of what brings him happiness and this is why he can relinquish his loved one for an uncertain future.

Sensitive Anton is sensitive. We can see that Beatrice's words affect him; he is not insensitive to her calm menaces and suffers from them. He is easily hurt by them but this suffering is only witnessed in the expressions on his face and the sad look in his eyes.

Unhappy Anton is unhappy because he can no longer be with Beatrice. Although it is his call, he does not want to lose Beatrice and is frustrated and sad that he has to leave her. Anton is torn between his need for freedom and his love for Beatrice. This is why he is very unhappy.

Unstable This ambivalence also shows Anton's instability. Beatrice thinks that he wants to leave her because he wishes to have the freedom to be with other women. In reality, Anton is only desirous to live in a better world. This is what makes him unstable and unreliable for Beatrice.

Beatrice

Beatrice is also a former philosophy student who is married to David and has an affair with Anton. Previously, she had been married to Anton. She is very much in love with Anton and aware of the strength of her love. She is seriously engaged in this affair but she is unhappy because Anton is leaving her.

Aware Beatrice is more aware than Anton of the importance of their love. While Anton is not willing to sacrifice his need for freedom, Beatrice is willing to sacrifice her need for stability in order to be with Anton. She is aware of the strength of her love for Anton and she makes Anton acutely aware of it, too.

Engaged For this purpose, Beatrice engages in long conversations on the nature of the love between her and Anton. She is determined to convince him of his love for her and to make him give up on his ideas of leaving. When she realizes she cannot persuade him, she decides to join him.

Serious Beatrice is quite serious in her propositions regarding her love for Anton. She says the most final things like 'forever is too little' (concerning the duration of her love for Anton). She never jokes and she talks as if she were a character from the Greek tragedies.

Loving Beatrice is very loving, not only in her gestures, but also in her words and actions. She experiences complete and total love and she does not fear to show it. She loves Anton with her heart and she is disposed to risk her life in order to be with him.

Disloyal Beatrice is disloyal to her husband, David, because she is very much in love with Anton. She lies to her husband and cheats on him. David, who is aware of her affair with Anton, is willing to forgive her and take her back when she finally returns home.

Unhappy Like Anton, Beatrice is very unhappy with the conclusion of her love affair with Anton. Unlike Anton, she expresses her feelings and we witness all of her thoughts regarding her unhappiness: her fear of Anton's instability and her great regret that she is losing him. Beatrice knows that both she and Anton will be unhappy without each other.

David

David is Beatrice's husband and friend of Anton's. He is unhappy and angry because his wife is cheating on him with Anton.

Unhappy David can only be unhappy knowing he lives with a wife who loves another man. He seems to suffer from it and tries to communicate with Beatrice, but she closes up and lies to him.

Angry Beatrice's cheating makes David an angry man. He starts a fight with Anton and the two fight with each other for a while. As neither wins, David is forced to give in, in particular when his wife shows her resentment to him.

THEMES

Perception Perception appears in the movie in the guise of the lovers' gaze towards each other and in the way they problematize love and life. There are long shots in which we witness the caring and loving gaze Beatrice and Anton have towards each other. This look about their faces also betrays something different, namely their perceptions on life, love and each other. While Beatrice seems serene and determined in her love for Anton, there is always something in Anton's eyes that seems distant and to hide something, maybe from himself, maybe from Beatrice. Although they perceive life in the same way – being together no matter what – they make different decisions based on their differing perceptions on how they should conduct their lives. While Beatrice seems to be happy with the love triangle they live in, Anton seeks to evade it and therefore decides to move to a different country. Eventually, they agree on this matter, too, as Beatrice agrees to follow him to that distant country. But in another shot, we see Beatrice run away from Anton and go back to her husband. Of the two, Anton seems the more independent in the couple. Beatrice cannot conceive living without him, which is not the case with Anton. Although they are very similar, they differ in the ways they envisage their lives together.

Violence The movie is far from a violent one. However, there are moments of violence which bespeak muted feelings and frustrations. The first act of violence is when Anton throws away everything on the table when Beatrice leaves his home. This is coupled with a previous event, when Beatrice and Anton were making love and Anton had thrown everything off the table. Thus, sexuality and violence seem to be paired together in the movie. The next act of violence is when Anton and David fight. Anton attacks David out of jealousy and frustration, and David hits back. The violence in this scene demonstrates the way the male characters do not express their feelings and thoughts and simply they erupt in acts of rage. Last, we witness again Anton's violence when he shoots the stereo and then goes inside his house and we hear two more shots. We might infer that he first killed Beatrice and then killed himself, but the movie does not give enough information to draw a firm conclusion. Altogether, violence in the film shows the passive-aggressive attitudes of the male characters and the ravages such attitudes can cause.

Freedom Freedom is the unspoken desire of Anton, who plans to go to another country in spite of the fact that he loves Beatrice. All we know is that he is to be transported in a cargo ship at night, probably in secret. This might refer back to the Romanian communist years when many people fled the country in this way. So we know that Anton is aching for the freedom he does not have in his home country. Freedom represents the real reason why Anton is willing to separate from Beatrice, and it seems to be quite overarching since his love for his lover and ex-wife is great. Anton faces great danger should he be intercepted during the process of leaving the country: he would be shot on the spot. As compared to Anton, Beatrice is not so keen on being free from Communist rule because her relationship with Anton fulfills her. However, she aches to be free from her husband, David, who is an impediment to the fulfillment of her love. Beatrice does not decide to leave the country out of the need to escape the communist regime but rather as a way of being with Anton. Of the two, it is clear that Anton is more dependent on the idea of freedom.

Attraction/Desire There is great attraction between Anton and Beatrice, as we can witness from the scenes where they make passionate love. Even on their last day together, they have intense sex and seem to be attracted to each other to the same extent. Although they have known each other for many years – since the beginning of college – the attraction between them has not waned. The scenes of love-making render the conflict more intense as we realize that a separation between such compatible people is nothing but hurtful. The power of attraction between the two is equal, that is they are each attracted to the other in the same way; there is no struggle for power and neither seems less interested than the other. Although Anton longs for a different life, he is still quite passionate about Beatrice. As for Beatrice, lust and love mingle to create the almost perfect relationship. In her own words, neither will be happy with the other—they would wake up wondering where the other is and go through life missing each other all the time. ‘I am life,’ Beatrice says as she tries to make Anton aware of her importance in his life. She manages to do so, and Anton asks her to join him. The great attraction between Beatrice and Anton is what tells us about their love, outside of words and gestures.

Love The main theme of the movie is love. It is a love story which is so great, so perfect, that its tragic ending cannot leave us unmoved. The main characters love each other very much. But we get a sense that of the two, it is Beatrice who loves Anton more. She asks him: ‘Do you think I would die without you?’ and Anton answers ‘Yes’. We get a sense that Beatrice cannot conceive of life without Anton. This is not the case for Anton, who never admits he loves Beatrice so much as not to be able to live without her. It is Beatrice who says that he won’t be able to have a good life in her absence, but Anton never admits it. However, if we take the last two gunshots as Anton’s killing of Beatrice and of himself, we could understand this as Anton’s recognition of this fact. Much of their love is consumed in their talking about their love. Beatrice keeps on theorizing about their love affair and explaining it into words to Anton, which might weaken the force of his love. Anton very rarely expresses his feelings, but we see from his actions – throwing objects off the table; the strength of his passion for Beatrice in the act of love-making; and the shootings – that he is very much in love with Beatrice. It is a very intense love story with a tragic ending.

Disloyalty There is a love triangle in the movie: Anton, Beatrice and David. Anton had been previously married to Beatrice, then they separated. Then Beatrice met David through Anton and she married David. But the flame never disappeared between Anton and Beatrice, so they became lovers while Beatrice was married to David. It is hard to say that Beatrice is disloyal to David while being, at the same time, loyal to her true love. Because of this great love, Beatrice seems less guilty of her betrayal of David. David, in his turn, is aware of the affair and is jealous of Anton. A fight ensues between the two men but neither wins (physically). But the one who really wins the fight is Anton, since it is him Beatrice truly loves. When Beatrice returns to David, it is not because she loves David, but because she cannot leave with Anton, for a reason unknown. Beatrice tells a lie to David, saying she has been to buy bread, when in fact she had been to see Anton. But, as stated previously, it is very hard to blame her of being disloyal to Anton. The tragedy of her love story, matching the greatness of her love for Anton, is punishment enough for Beatrice.

Suffering There is a lot of suffering in the movie as we witness the two heroes of the love story on their last day together. Since they both love each other very much, it is very hard for them to part. Beatrice tries to explain to Anton that without her, his life will be meaningless, as she is ‘life’ itself for him. However, Anton does not relinquish his intention to flee the country. This conflict between his great love for Beatrice and his equally immense need for freedom is what causes tremendous suffering to Anton, which we can witness in the sad expressions on his face and in his bouts of rage. Unlike Anton, who very rarely expresses his feelings verbally, Beatrice is quite vocal about her love and problematizes their problems to the point of exhaustion. Beatrice also suffers immensely because she is about to lose Anton; in particular, she thinks he is leaving because he wants to be free to be with other women. She tells him he is afraid of his love for her and that he is backing off because he might miss the embrace of other women. We can tell that Beatrice does not like the idea of changing from her first reaction to Anton’s proposal, but she gives up on her desires in order to be with Anton. We do not know why she abandons the project at the last moment, but we know that in doing so she is in pain. It is a tragic love story and we witness the heroes’ immense suffering.

Growth There is a sense of growth in the movie, or search for growth, coming from both heroes. For Anton, growth means leaving the country and living one day in a free world. For Beatrice, growth is being able to live her love with Anton fully, without the impediment of her marriage or Anton’s other wishes.

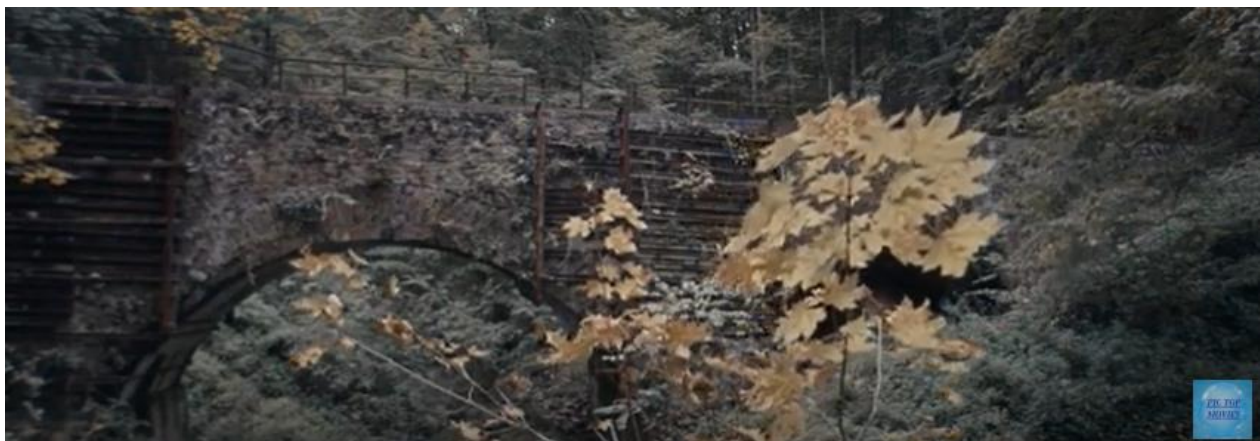
Since the two characters have known each other since college, we get a sense of their growing and forming together. They are both philosophers, which we can witness in the deep problematizing they do about their feelings and thoughts. While Anton feels trapped in a country which prohibits his freedom, Beatrice does not seem bothered by this matter, as long as she can be with her loved one. As a love story, the movie is making the point that growth represents for both characters the possibility of being together, of being able to live fully and without any constraints their love. But this is destroyed by Anton the minute he decides to leave. When he tries to repair his mistake and asks Beatrice to join him, it is too late and Beatrice returns to David. The death of the two lovers represents the stopping of growth and the failure of their love project.

Memory/Regret The non-linear story-line is made up of the lovers' memories of when they were together and of what-might-have-been. Because of this, it is hard to ascertain which event is a memory of something that really happened and which an event that occurred in the mind of one of the protagonists. Be that as it may, we get a glimpse into their last day together, interspersed with memories from before and with counterfactuals. The memories are either narrated – such as when Anton tells the story of how he met Beatrice – or shown – such as when they were making love the time before. The counterfactuals occur seamlessly; it is hard to tell which is a memory and which is a counterfactual. For instance, the moment Anton shoots twice inside his house could be the end of the story or just a way things might have been. The fact is that these memories will stick with them forever, as Beatrice points out. And they will never be free from each other because they are the perfect match for one another. As such, the memories are there to reinforce this idea and the strength of the protagonists' love for each other. Memory is coupled with regret for the impossibility of a love which seems perfect.

Priorities Priorities are one of the themes in the movie. They have to do with the characters' choices in life and with the way things turn out in the story. Anton prioritizes going abroad over staying in the country and continuing his affair with Beatrice. Beatrice's only priority is being with Anton and she would do anything – even leave her home country which she does not seem very inclined to do. In Anton, the priority of going abroad puts into question the extent of his love for Beatrice. Does he really love her so much since he can leave her behind so easily? On the other hand, Beatrice's attachment to her home country shows the great extent of her love for Anton when she says she has decided to join him. But why does she not leave with him eventually? Because she realizes their relationship would never be the same and moreover, it would be jeopardized by living (together) in a different country. For both characters, their priorities mean the difficult decisions they have to make in relation to each other and the sad outcome of their beautiful love story.

SCENES

A SUMMER LANDSCAPE We see a forest and a bridge in the middle of the forest. We can hear the wind rustling through the leaves. It is a beautiful summer landscape



ANTON CALLS OUT TO BEATRICE A woman is running past the bridge and a man is standing on the porch of the house. The man, named Anton, calls out to the woman: 'Beatrice!', as if he were losing her for good.



THE FOREST We see the forest again and what looks like a stone bridge in the middle of the picture. There is the same rustle of the leaves as in the first shots.



BEATRICE RETURNS TO ANTON Next, we see the woman named Beatrice run back to Anton. They hug each other passionately. They do not speak to each other but there is a great intensity of feeling between them.



BEATRICE AND ANTON HAVE A CONVERSATION Beatrice and Anton are sitting at a table in the house. Anton is drinking alcohol and Beatrice is smoking. Beatrice says that she has read somewhere that when you really love somebody you see them the way God sees them.



MAKING ORDER After Beatrice leaves the house, Anton tries to tidy up the room. He takes several objects off the table and merely places them elsewhere. He does this meticulously.



ANTON HAS A FIT OF RAGE After meticulously arranging several objects on the table, Anton stops and looks at them. All of a sudden, he reclines and throws away all the objects from the table.



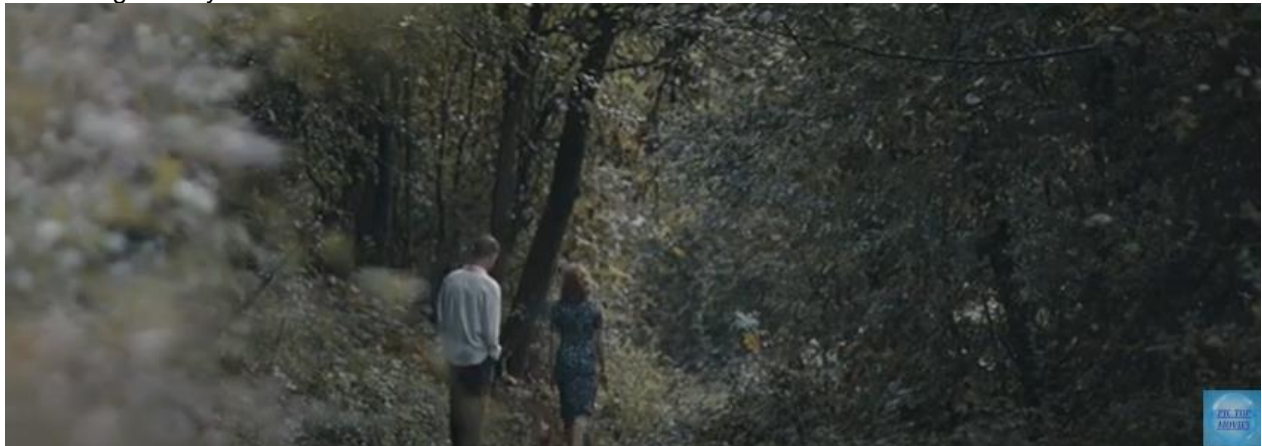
ANTON AND BEATRICE MAKE LOVE Next, we see Anton and Beatrice in the act of love making. They have passionate sex, and Anton, in a gesture similar to the one in the previous scene, throws away all the objects from the table in order to sit Beatrice on it.



BEATRICE HAS AN INSIGHT Anton and Beatrice have a conversation on the edge of a stream. Beatrice says she knows why Anton is leaving her. She says it is because he has realized he loves her and that he will not be able to embrace other women after this. Anton does not say anything.



BEATRICE AND ANTON HAVE ANOTHER CONVERSATION While walking through the forest, Beatrice asks Anton if he believes they were destined for each other. Anton says that if you believe in destiny, then destiny exists. Beatrice replies that he is trying to hide something and that he is not answering directly.



BEATRICE AND ANTON HAVE A SWIM Beatrice and Anton go to a lake in the forest. First, Beatrice takes off her clothes and enters the lake. They are talking about their love. Beatrice says that she wants to live with Anton forever. Anton, as he also enters the lake, says that their love might fade away when faced with daily routine.



ANTON HAS A PLAN After the swim, Anton and Beatrice lie down together on the ground in the forest. We can hear again the rustle of the wind in the trees. Anton says that he is to depart the next day, hidden in a shipping container on a boat.



DAVID ENTERS THE SCENE A bearded, middle-aged man named David comes to Anton's house. He is inquiring about his wife, if she is in Anton's house. Anton says she isn't.



BEATRICE EMERGES FROM THE HOUSE David keeps staying around Anton's house and inquiring about his wife. At one point, Beatrice comes out of Anton's house and looks at David with reproach. She does not say a word and, instead, re-enters the house.



ANTON AND DAVID FIGHT Next, David goes to Anton and hits him. The two men start a fight. At the end, exhausted, they lie on the ground next to each other. Neither has won. David leaves.



ANOTHER MOMENT OF TENDERNESS Anton enters the house, where Beatrice is waiting for him. She tends to his wounds with a lot of tenderness. After this, they make love again.



THE SHOOTINGS IN THE NIGHT Next, we see Anon alone on the porch at night. He is listening to music from a gramophone. Anton takes a gun and shoots into the music player. He then enters the house and we hear two more shootings.



BEATRICE AND ANTON HAVE BREAKFAST TOGETHER In a peaceful and pleasant scene, we see Beatrice and Anton having breakfast together in Anton's house. They do not talk to each other but look at each other all the time.



ANTON'S CONFESSION Anton is in a bar, drinking, smoking and talking to another man. The man looks like David. Anton tells David that the woman outside the bar is his former wife. Anton then begins to tell the story of how he and his former wife met. The woman outside the bar enters the room and we see it is Beatrice.



ANTON AND BEATRICE MAKE LOVE Back in the woods, we see Anton and Beatrice make passionate love again. She is dressed in the same way as in the first scenes.



ANTON AND BEATRICE PART FOR GOOD Anton and Beatrice have a conversation about their love again. She says she is leaving for now and Anton cannot tell if she is going to come back or never return. Beatrice asks Anton to call out her name as she leaves. She then goes away and at length Anton calls out her name. She runs away.



AT THE RAIL STATION Anton is alone at the rail station. He is waiting for the train and for Beatrice. Beatrice does not arrive. He looks despondent.



BEATRICE BACK HOME Beatrice is back at home with her husband, David, who asks her where she has been. She answers that she went to buy bread. David remarks that she has not brought any bread and she replies that it is because there was none left. Beatrice looks sad.

