

HUMANITIES INSTITUTE
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PHILANTHROPY / Filantropica (2002)

Nae Caranfil

OVERVIEW

Auteur Born on September 7, 1960 in Romania, Nae Caranfil is considered the best Romanian director of the 1990s. He graduated in 1984 from the Caragiale Academy of Theatrical Arts and Cinematography in Bucharest and started his career by directing short films, such as *Venice in September* (1983) and *Thirty Years of Insomnia* (1984). He continued with several features: *E Pericoloso Sporgeri* (1993), *Asphalt Tango* (1996), *Dolce Far Niente* (1998), *Filantropica* (2002), *The Rest is Silence* (2007), *Closer to the Moon* (2013), and *6,9 on the Richter Scale* (2016). The previous version of his English feature *Closer to the Moon* was entitled *Alice in the Land of Comrades* and won a grant of €576,600 from the National Centre of Cinema in 2007. *Closer to the Moon* premiered at Lincoln Center on November 29, 2013.

Film Caranfil's *Filantropica* (2002) is a dark comedy acclaimed by critics as a landmark of the *Romanian New Wave* (i.e., a genre of realist and often minimalist films) along with *the Death of Mr. Lazarescu* (2005) directed by Cristi Puiu. It's a satire against the educational, social and political system that foster non-humanistic values against ethical values, such as: honesty, altruism, integrity, compassion, true love, etc. The film presents a society with values turned upside-down that changes people, either for good, or for worse, in conformity with their choices of action.

Background The action of the film is set in the post-Communist Romania, and it presents a democratic society, with people trying to adapt to the new world that brought not only social, political and economic instability, but also a reversal of the values, a dog-eat-dog world, with swindlers being praised and intellectual people being impoverished and despised. The film won quite a few awards: *Special Jury Award* at Wiesbaden goEast (2002), *Public Prize* at Paris Film Festival (2002), *Young European Jury Award* at Mons International Festival of Love Films (2002), and *Audience Award* at Würzburg International Filmweekend (2003). Nae Caranfil is not only the film's director, but also the screenwriter of *Filantropica*. Like he does in most of his films, he does a cameo in *Filantropica*, too – singing *My Way* in the karaoke scene.

SYNOPSIS

Filantropica shows the life of Ovidiu Gorea, a mid-40s literature high school teacher and novice writer who wrote a collection of short stories entitled *Nobody Dies for Free*, but still lives with his parents and struggles to make ends meet. He falls in love with a materialistic young woman, Diana Dobrovicescu, and in order to be with her, he decides he must earn quick cash. Thus, he associates with Pavel Puiu, the leader of an organized network of beggars operating under the guise of Filantropica Foundation. Ovidiu and Miruna, a former prostitute, now Pavel's secretary, pull a scam so that Ovidiu can impress Diana by posing as a rich man. They go out to fancy restaurants as a married couple to celebrate their 10-year wedding anniversary, and when they realize they haven't got enough money, they make a scene to encourage other customers to pay for their meal. The waiter is in on it, and splits the profit with them. Pavel's next move is to make Diana break up with Ovidiu. Helped by Miruna, he sets Ovidiu up and makes Diana realize that Ovidiu pretends to be wealthy just to sleep with her. He has Ovidiu beaten up by a waiter at a karaoke bar, has some newspaper photographers capture the scene, and thus takes the scam to the next level, having Ovidiu and Miruna appear on TV as the symbol of the common Romanian family, victims of a broken society that allows hard-working men to be underpaid. Pavel announces that Filantropica Foundation has opened an account in the Popescus' name. The Popescus receive a great deal of money from donations, but Ovidiu has no access to any of it. He is not interested in Diana

anymore, and remains with Miruna in an apartment especially customized by Pavel so as to show the reporters that Ovidiu and Miruna are a family.

MAIN CHARACTERS

Ovidiu Gorea (Mircea Diaconu): A mid-40s literature high school teacher and novice writer, single and still living with his parents

Robert Dobrovicescu (Cristian Gheorghe): Ovidiu's problematic student

Diana Dobrovicescu (Viorica Vodă): apparently Robert's sister, a gorgeous model

Pavel Puiuț called Mr. Pepe (Gheorghe Dinică): a former Communist prisoner, the leader of an organized network of beggars that operates under the guise of a Foundation called Filantropica

Miruna Stan (Mara Niculescu): Pavel's secretary and Ovidiu's partner in crime

The Poet from the North Railway Station (Florin Zamfirescu): a poet whom Ovidiu meets at the Writers' Coffee Shop, and who connects him with the network of swindlers operating under the guise of Filantropica Foundation

Gigi Piedone (Dan Aștilean): one of Pavel's collectors; he collects taxes from the beggars for whom Pavel writes poems

Bulache Fotică called the Likable (Marius Florea Vizante): one of Diana's friends, not very much liked by them

PLOT

10-year wedding anniversary Ovidiu and Miruna enjoy live music in a fancy restaurant, both immersed in a romantic atmosphere. Ovidiu realizes he can't pay the bill. He offers to pay for the meal in installments. Miruna cries her heart out. The waiter calls for his goons. One of them takes hold of Ovidiu. Miruna hits him with the bouquet of flowers Ovidiu gave her. Ovidiu asks the waiter to try to understand him – he is a modest high school teacher who wanted to do something special for his wife at their 10-year wedding anniversary. The waiter tells him they will keep Miruna there until he brings them the money. He has got an hour to do that.



Saved by a stranger A wealthy regular customer, two women by his side, pays for their meal. Ovidiu shakes his hand. Everyone applauds. Ovidiu and Miruna walk down the street, side by side. Ovidiu talks to Miruna in the 2nd person plural as if she were not his wife. He tells her how he got caught in this messy situation.



Slice you like salami The scoundrel Robert, one of Ovidiu's problematic students, is about to be expelled. He threatens Ovidiu to "slice him like salami" unless he helps him stay in school. Ovidiu gives in to the pressure, and asks the principal for permission to meet Robert's parents so that they can talk some sense into him.



Meeting Diana When a door opens, Ovidiu meets Robert's sister, Diana, instead. She opens the classroom door just when Ovidiu acknowledges in voice-over that "sometimes in life a door opens and suddenly nothing is the same." Ovidiu is completely overwhelmed by Diana's beauty and keeps repeating her name, in a clumsy and awkward way, amazed that this gorgeous, refined young woman is, indeed, Robert's sister. He offers Diana the book he wrote, and asks her out.



Coffee or fancy private parties? Since a coffee rendezvous doesn't suit Diana's tastes, she asks Ovidiu to take her to a private party where she has a free invite as she previously made an advertisement for toothpaste for the hosts. They dance passionately, but the night with Diana leaves Ovidiu nearly broke so that he makes up an excuse and dashes away.



Considering options Ovidiu concludes that “girls nowadays are much too expensive.” He decides to back off from Diana, and continue writing his new novel, but he can’t overcome writer’s block. Diana’s advertisement for toothpaste runs on TV. Ovidiu is mesmerized. His passion for the young, gorgeous woman reignites.



Not your territory! Desperate to make money at all costs so as to be with Diana, Ovidiu strives to sell his book, *Nobody Dies for Free*, on the street with no luck. A big shot gets out of his car and collects money from the beggars settled there. Two of them call Ovidiu a “bum”, hit him with their canes and tell him to scam as this is not his territory. It’s Piedone’s.



Vodka for a poem Ovidiu strives to make a sale to a few writers at the Writers' Coffee Shop, but he can't. A ragged-looking man who calls himself the Poet from the North Railway Station recites him a poem for 50 ml of vodka, and buys all the 10 books Ovidiu intended to sell at the coffee shop. Ovidiu finds out that the so-called poet makes five times more money than a high school teacher by reciting only two poems, not even written by him.



Filantropica Foundation Sent by the Poet to the Filantropica Foundation to find help in selling his book, Ovidiu gets to the basement where Pavel Puiuț, the leader of the Foundation, shows him what they actually do and who they are. Pavel is the Bucharest's leader of an organized network of beggars. He writes emotional texts for the beggars to recite to the passers-by in order to encourage them to give money. Pavel gets 20 % per text from Piedone, his collector of taxes from the beggars, and they also give a cut to the cops. Miruna is Pavel's secretary; she writes and prints the texts.



Pavel's offer Pavel promises Ovidiu he will make even more money than he needs if he engages in a scam that Pavel has not done before. He considers Ovidiu the most appropriate to play this role due to his genuine inner sadness, but Ovidiu thinks that "organized begging" is a disgrace. Pavel admonishes him and tells him that this is petty thinking. Passing with the car by some "freelance beggars", Pavel informs Ovidiu that they earn very little money which makes them useless to society, and that Ovidiu is in a similar situation with them. If Ovidiu accepts his offer, he will not even have to assume the role of a beggar since he will not have to ask for any money.



The Scam Ovidiu accepts Pavel's offer, and takes Miruna to a luxury restaurant. They pretend to be a 10-year married couple that realize they have no money to pay for the meal. Unhappy with the situation, Ovidiu wants to back out just when Pavel stands up from a nearby table. Ovidiu tells Pavel that this is beneath his dignity, but Pavel makes him wonder if he can really afford dignity, considering the money he earns. Pavel tells Ovidiu he was an aspiring writer, too, who had to pay for that dream with 5 years in the communist prison, a thing which taught him what dignity really was and how much it cost. Pavel leaves. Ovidiu gets into character, yelling at the waiter and making a scene as he talks about his financial problems. He even finds joy in feeling like an acclaimed actor under the staring eyes of the public represented by the restaurant's customers.



The Reason The scam repeats with Ovidiu and Miruna in various other luxury restaurants finishing with the restaurant in the opening scene of the film at the moment when the waiter gives them a cut from the profit gathered from the donations for their meal since they didn't enjoy any of the treats that were marked on the check. As they walk down the street, Ovidiu wraps up his story – he tells Miruna he took Pavel's offer so as to conquer the materialistic Diana by posing as a powerful, rich man.



How the rich smoke Ovidiu picks Diana up in a rented Porsche. He tells her he bought the car by selling 300,000 copies of his book and goes out with her and her friends to an open-air club by the lake. Once there, a fellow whom the guys tried to ditch, Bulache Fotică, ironically called by them *the Likable*, shows up, picks on Ovidiu and hits on Diana. Ovidiu mocks him and shows him how rich people smoke – he asks for Bulache's pack of cigarettes and lighter, picks up a cigarette, takes a puff, then throws everything, the pack, the lighter and the cigarette into the lake. He asks Bulache how much he charges to make himself scarce, pays him twice the price he asks for and has the bodyguard throw him out of the club.



A pretentious bimbo Ovidiu and Miruna pull the scam 5 days per week. At one of their “performances”, Ovidiu tells Miruna he is a beggar during the week so that he could be a prince at the weekend since he can see Diana only on weekends due to her job as a model. Miruna is angry that Ovidiu keeps whining about that “pretentious bimbo”, as she calls Diana, even at their 10-day anniversary as “husband and wife”.



Sponsoring a quick one Since Ovidiu lives with his parents, he cannot have sex with Diana in his parents' apartment. He asks Pavel if he could spend the night with Diana in one of his houses, and Miruna reminds Pavel which house is available. Annoyed by their request to “sponsor a quick one”, Pavel shouts at Miruna that the only reason he lets Ovidiu have the whole profit is that Ovidiu could grasp the opportunities that may arise for him and appreciate Pavel's help. Pavel further complains to Miruna that instead of doing this, Ovidiu proves naive enough to think he experiences pure feelings for Diana.



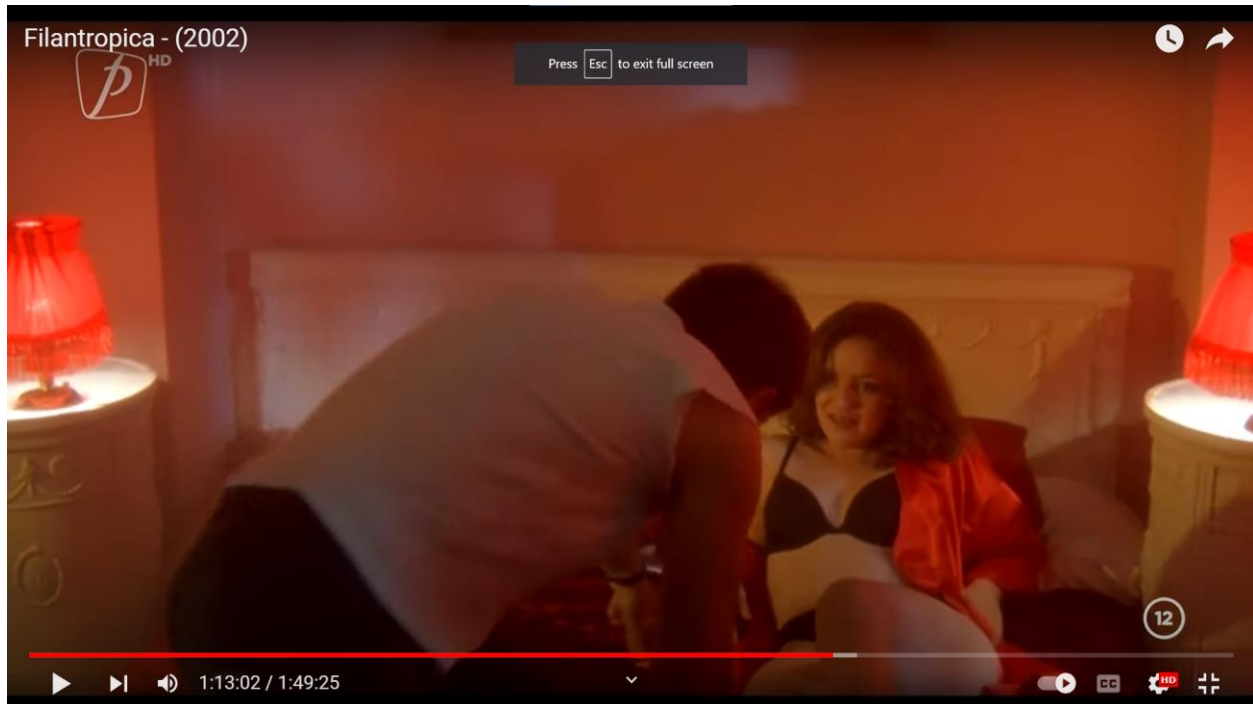
Caught, but not exposed Bulache happens to be at the same restaurant with Ovidiu and Miruna when they pull the scam. He is shocked to find out Ovidiu hasn't got the money to cover the check, and on top of that, he is married. He throws Ovidiu a cigarette on the table, and dares him to smoke like the rich, but the restaurant's customers who contributed to pay for Ovidiu's and Miruna's meal admonish Bulache for picking on a poor man and tell him to get lost.



Caught, and exposed Ovidiu takes Diana to one of Pavel's luxury houses that he claims to be his own and gives some money to a beggar standing by the gate. Diana tells him she likes him since, unlike other men that tried to impress her with their money, he is not a rude person. About to have sex with her, Ovidiu is exposed by a phone call from one of Pavel's clients that wants to make a reservation for the house. Ovidiu argues the phone call was just an accident. He shows Diana his typewriter, his clothes and other personal objects, but despite his fierce attempt, he cannot convince Diana that he truly owns the apartment. When Diana asks for his landline phone number, and calls that number, one of Ovidiu's parents tells her he is not at home and Diana storms off.



Miruna shows her true colors Ovidiu goes to Miruna's place, tells her what happened with Diana, and after some drinks, Miruna invites him into her bed. She lets him know she was a prostitute, but she has not practiced it since she met Pavel. Ovidiu is bewildered. She tells him she bets he has never met a woman who knows her stuff, otherwise, he wouldn't have run around with such "pretentious bimbos" like Diana.



A sour taste of treats On a Sunday, Miruna suggests they should go out, and this time, enjoy all the treats they have never tasted by resorting to the same scam and con the customers to pay for their meal. They go to a karaoke bar. However, with all the commotion of loud music, nobody can hear them making a scene so that the waiter grabs Ovidiu, takes him to the basement and beats him up just when some newspaper photographers pop out of the blue and capture the scene.



The scam, uncovered On a hospital bed, Ovidiu realizes that Pavel, Miruna and the waiter were in on the karaoke scandal, and he also understands that the phone call he received when he took Diana at one of Pavel's houses was also Pavel's signature. Pavel confirms and lets Ovidiu know that he and Miruna will have to appear the following day on TV, at the most prestigious TV channel as the Popescus, the symbol of the common Romanian family.



Backing out Ovidiu refuses and wants out. But Pavel informs him there are lots of money involved, and they are about to create a masterpiece in the same manner as writers create art. Ovidiu dashes off and lets them know that Miruna is not his wife, his last name is not Popescu and, unfortunately, he's not a writer, but a teacher.



Robert's life is threatened Two goons pay Ovidiu a visit at school, during his class. They look for Robert and warn him. If in three days Robert doesn't give the money he owes to a certain person called the Baron, "life is complex and it has many aspects". He can get crippled for life, or even worse than that. It seems Robert hit the Baron's car and refused to pay for damages. The amount of money involved is 3,000 dollars.



Taking the scam to the next level Assuming the role of the Popescus, Ovidiu and Miruna appear at a popular TV talk show together with the waiter who beat Ovidiu up, and explain what happened at the karaoke bar. Pavel gives a call, presents himself as the representative of the Filantropica Foundation, and expresses his revulsion against a broken society that doesn't even show a grain of respect for the typical, ordinary family that worked years on end without being able to make a decent living. He announces that his Foundation has opened an account in their name so that people can donate for the Popescus.



Dodging being exposed Bulache calls, too, and reveals their scam. He says he met the Popescus at another restaurant where a few customers, he included, contributed to pay for their meal. Ovidiu makes Bulache admit he is a student at a private university, he owns a fancy car and doesn't even know how much a bus ticket costs and thus, he proves Bulache is nothing but a rich kid who finds it amusing to make phone pranks together with his friends with whom he is at a party right now. Ovidiu concludes by saying that it's not okay for a young man to mock something that he can't understand since he was lucky enough to enjoy the wealth of his parents.



No story, no alms At a bank, Ovidiu wants to withdraw the equivalent of 3,000 dollars, but he can't. He needs a password. Pavel celebrates his victory with drinks and music, accompanied by his crowd. He suggests Ovidiu should reconsider who the copyright owner of the scam truly is. When Ovidiu threatens him he will inform the police, the crowd burst out laughing, and call Ovidiu a rookie. Ovidiu asks Pavel to lend him 3,000 dollars, but he wouldn't tell him the reason. Pavel admonishes him for not sharing with him an emotional story that could impress him and make him lend Ovidiu the money. Ovidiu dashes off. Pavel follows him, and screams at him from the doorway: "The hand that reaches out, but doesn't tell a story, gets no alms." Miruna runs after Ovidiu, and whispers the password to him.



Diana shows her true colors Ovidiu meets up with Diana and gives her the money for Robert. Diana warns him Robert is a punk who doesn't deserve his help, but takes the money, and tells Ovidiu he can visit her later that night. Exhausted, Ovidiu doesn't wake up in time for the meeting. Diana's neighbours tell him they saw her taking off earlier while carrying a suitcase. At the North Railway Station, Ovidiu gets drunk with the Poet and recites him a poem that the poet wants to learn by heart.



Choosing to help the scoundrel Robert When Ovidiu leaves, he is surrounded by a bunch of vagrants, pimps and drug addicts, among which he finds Robert huffing paint and hiding from the goons. Robert admits to him that Diana is only a chick sent by him to play the role of his sister. Ovidiu lets him know he is not worthy of his help, and regrets having got caught in this situation. He gets into a taxi with Robert to find him a shelter for the night so he could ditch the goons. A vagrant informs someone on the phone that the target was spotted.



Scam, completed When the taxi arrives at the destination, two guys loom in the distance. Ovidiu shouts at Robert to scam. It's Pavel's guys. They take Ovidiu to his fake wife where a bunch of reporters are waiting for him as he and Miruna have received lots of money from people's donations. It's a new apartment, especially customized so as to show that Ovidiu and Miruna are a family. Pavel reminds Ovidiu he owes him 3,000 dollars and leaves.



Family life Miruna asks Ovidiu to wake her up the following day to prepare him breakfast. Ovidiu says it's not necessary, and kisses her on the shoulder. Miruna asks him not to get upset by her refusal to sleep with him as she is very tired. He says he understands and goes to his typewriter. Miruna falls asleep in front of the TV. Ovidiu has overcome writer's block – he writes about a man that gets into bed beside his wife. And he does exactly that – he gets into bed beside Miruna just when Diana's advertisement for toothpaste runs on TV. Ovidiu turns the TV off, not interested anymore.



Robert's aftermath The lights in Miruna's and Ovidiu's bedroom turn off. From under their window, Pavel realizes everything worked fine and leaves just when he spots the vagrant Robert lying in the street. He understands Robert is hiding from some goons, picks him up in his car, and recruits him into his network of beggars. He informs Robert it's better to beg for money than to steal it. At the end, Pavel speaks to the audience as he gazes at the camera: "Do you feel pity for this piece of trash? Hah! Got your money!"



CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Ovidiu Gorea:

Ovidiu is an idealistic and honest mid-40s high school literature teacher turned by unfortunate events into a pragmatic, dishonorable man.

Idealist In a society built on money and power, Ovidiu is a dreamer, a mid-40s teacher still living with his parents, who thinks he can overcome his financial problems by writing novels, disregarding the real interests of everyday people, which are not by any means intellectual assets but, on the contrary, material ones. Moreover, he is driven and propelled by idealistic emotions into shady affairs in which he could have never otherwise got involved. When Ovidiu asks Pavel to allow him to spend the night with Diana at one of Pavel's houses, Pavel admonishes him: "There are three main jobs in this world: wealth, poverty and sex. You can make a living from either of them. But from love and writing, you starve to death, you moron, you die for free." Ovidiu confuses sex for love, which shows him as a naive and idealistic person. He thinks he is in love with the beautiful young model, and idealizes Diana, who is nothing but a mere opportunist. The great emphasis Ovidiu puts on emotions is foreshadowed by the very title of the composition he writes on the blackboard as a task for his students. Being interrupted by two goons in search for Robert, Ovidiu manages to write down just one word – "Feeling—instead of the complete title, "The Patriotic Feeling in the 1848's Poetry". Thus, the feelings he has for Diana and his idealistic care for her brother's well-being prevent Ovidiu from getting out of Pavel's devious schemes.

Honest and kind-hearted When Pavel tries to convince Ovidiu to engage in his affairs, Ovidiu admits to him from the start that he rejects Pavel's dishonest ways of extorting money from gullible, compassionate people. But despite his being tricked into accepting Pavel's offer, Ovidiu will continuously strive to return to his old moral ways of living throughout the whole story. Even after Robert admits he is not Diana's brother, the kind-natured Ovidiu still tries to find him a shelter for the night so that the goons couldn't find him.

Smart, but gullible Ovidiu has got education smarts, but no real-life smarts and abilities. He doesn't know how to deal with his students so as to get their respect (they smoke in his class, etc.), or how to cope with their outbursts, for example when Robert threatens to slice Ovidiu "like salami" if he allows the people in charge to expel him, Ovidiu accepts his threat passively. He cannot even see that Pavel's Filantropica Foundation is more than meets the eye. He thinks the Foundation sustains various cultural projects, at which point Pavel's sarcastic retort accurately shows one of Ovidiu's traits, that is, gullibility: "Such a great deal of acuity... I find it really touching." Ovidiu is indeed a gullible man of whom unprincipled men like Pavel take advantage, for example when Pavel completes his scam, he obtains a great amount of money from donations in Ovidiu's name, whereas Ovidiu has no access to any money whatsoever.

Pavel Puiu:

Pavel is a former Communist prisoner turned by imprisonment into an astute, ruthless swindle and the leader of an organized network of beggars.

Smart, and astute He is a well-read person, endowed both with education smarts and real-life smarts. The 5 years he spent in the communist prison due to his moral convictions that he put down in writing turned him into an astute individual, able to read people correctly in different social situations and act accordingly. He reads Ovidiu from the start and realizes he could use such a man due to his genuine inner sadness and gullibility. He also understands Robert's situation just by throwing him a quick look, and recruits him into his network of beggars.

Dishonest and manipulative Pavel makes use of his sly nature to lure Ovidiu into his devious scams. He deceives Ovidiu by telling him only bits and pieces so that Pavel can acquire a great deal of money on his account. Pavel talks and acts in a very persuasive way, manipulating and sugarcoating Ovidiu into becoming a swindler, actually Pavel's dummy by means of which he could execute a huge scam.

Ruthless and self-involved Pavel's ruthless temper is shown when he asks his men to poke a vagrant's eye out with a ping pong ball so that he could use him as bait by arousing people's compassion to make donations. True to his egocentric nature, once the scam is completed, Pavel will keep all the money he got by using Ovidiu.

Miruna Stan:

She is a sneaky woman who, despite being in love with Ovidiu, knows how to manoeuvre him, both on a professional level by making him complete Pavel's scam, and on a personal one by making him choose her instead of Diana.

Sneaky Miruna jumps into Ovidiu's and Pavel's conversation and, despite Pavel's angry outburst, she convinces him to let Ovidiu have one of his luxury houses so he could have sex with Diana. Yet, this is just another deceitful maneuver agreed upon by Pavel and Miruna so that they can expose Ovidiu and make Diana realize Ovidiu is not the owner of the house, but a poor high school teacher.

Prudent Being in love with Ovidiu, Miruna listens patiently to Ovidiu's constant talk about Diana, and she is prudent enough to wait until his passion for the "pretentious bimbo" dies out. Then, she reveals her feelings for him, inviting him to her bed: "Are you coming, my dear? Don't be a sap! I bet you've never met a woman who knows her stuff. Otherwise, you wouldn't have run around with such pretentious bimbos."

Satisfied Miruna is satisfied with her life; she is a self-confident woman not ashamed to reveal to Ovidiu her past life as a prostitute, and admit to him that since she met Pavel, she has not practiced prostitution anymore. She owns her past and redeems herself by choosing to live a moral life with the man she loves.

THEMES

SOCIETY

Class *Filantropica* presents a society divided into classes. As intro sound effects, one can hear dogs barking and howling while the screen reads: "Once there was a town whose residents were divided into princes and beggars. In between these two worlds, nothing existed but stray dogs. They formed the middle-class". In the opening image of the film, a few dogs are digging through the trash for food. It's a foreshadowing of the food scam in which the middle-class high school teacher, Ovidiu, symbolized by the stray dog, is about to engage. He is going to pull the food scam at various fancy restaurants, pretending he hasn't got enough money to pay for his and his fake wife's meal, actually a meal that they have never had. Ovidiu is neither a prince, nor a beggar. He is nothing but a stray dog, a symbol for the middle-class. Yet, a middle-class digging for scraps through the trash can no longer be called middle-class. Therefore, Ovidiu is, in fact, nothing but the symbol of the middle-class people that actually became non-existent, turning into the class of poor men in the post-Comunist Romania.

Values In light of the above, *Filantropica* is not only a satire against the Romanian educational system that disregards valuable professionals, and not even only a satire against the Romanian political system that fosters inequality, injustice, poverty, etc. First and foremost, *Filantropica* is a satire against a perverted, upside-down society that valorizes and validates non-values, which run contrary to any kind of moral principles. Non-values, such as: deceit, egotistic behaviors, cruelty, injustice, promiscuous conducts, manipulation, swindling are fostered by charlatans like Pavel Puiuț, men endowed with money and power, that are only interested in their well-being. The story shows human weaknesses with great authenticity and savor. Diana deceives Ovidiu by exploiting his weaknesses, e. g., his feelings for her. Thus, she grabs the money Ovidiu gives her for her fake brother, Robert, and flees from town. For some characters, human weaknesses will eventually turn into strenghts. For example, Miruna gives up her promiscuous activities as a prostitute, and embraces the moral conduct of a one-man's woman. Therefore, the film makes us appreciate the values of an ethical love life. While Miruna has found redemption, Pavel refuses to appreciate such a value and refuses to embrace it again. He turns from an

honest, principled man, who fought communist social injustices through his writing, into a heartless, greedy swindler obsessed with money and power.

All in all, *Filantropica* is an incisive accusation against a world built on non-values, a world created by humans, downgraded and disfigured, that was supposed to have been built on love and kindness.

Power Power manifests in *Filantropica* through threats and manipulations, either directed from the rich to the poor, or from the street-smart people to those who lack this characteristic. Ovidiu's problematic student, Robert, threatens Ovidiu: "Let me spell it out for you. If they boot me out and you're on their side, you won't be my buddy anymore. Then I come see you... and slice you like salami. Fair? Sounds fair to me." And the threat works. Ovidiu complies and lets himself get manipulated. Paradoxically enough, one of the goons in search for Robert threatens Ovidiu's students: "Yo, that's it! Just one breath, and you'll get a slug between your eyes. What's this? We're mocking school, eh? Everybody write the composition. Just dare me to catch you cheat!" And the goon walks out.



Using power as a tool for manipulation is what Pavel does with Ovidiu. Ovidiu gets manipulated by Pavel, the sly puppeteer who steers everyone through everything as an astute connoisseur of all the human wants and needs, struggles and difficulties pertaining to people of different social backgrounds. He puts human inner flaws or weaknesses (such as Ovidiu's lust for the young, gorgeous model that cares only about money), and individual dramas (such as Robert's hunt by the goons, or the beggars' inescapable poverty) to use and earns good money through them.

Poverty On the one hand, poverty is dramatised by Pavel's network of beggars who are willing to accept almost anything, even to be maimed by Pavel's men, just to get by. On the other hand, as Pavel lets Ovidiu know, there are the freelance beggars who don't contribute to society, who are "worthless", in Pavel's words, and who make even much less money than Pavel's network of beggars. Pavel even compares Ovidiu to the latter while he strives to persuade Ovidiu to join his men and engage in a scam Pavel has not done before. Poverty is figuratively represented in the opening scene by the trash through which dogs are digging for food. On the screen, one can read: "Once there was a town whose residents were divided into princes and beggars. In between these two worlds, nothing existed but stray dogs. They formed the middle class". In reality, the middle class, represented by the stray dogs, as well as by Ovidiu, vanished in the post-Communist Romania and turned into the class of poor men.

Inequality A wrongly perceived and acquired democracy in immediate post-Communist Romania led to inequality in the form of the unjust and unequal distribution of incomes across the population. With the middle-class disappearing in post-Communist Romania, poverty arose, which triggered dishonest methods to obtain money. In *Filantropica*, people resort to swindling as a means to get by (e.g., Pavel's beggars, Robert ultimately included), or to accomplish their dreams (e.g., Pavel and, of course, Ovidiu). Pavel's dream was to become a writer. He used to be an honest man who stood up for his principles and strove to make a change as a novice writer, but the 5 years he spent in a communist prison for these exact reasons turned him into a swindler, the leader of an organized network of beggars operating under the guise of Filantropica Foundation. The story shows how poverty generates beggary, an activity that will be later viewed and analyzed through the lens of dignity. When Pavel tries to persuade Ovidiu to join his network of swindlers, he replies: "With the money you earn, can you really afford dignity? (...) 'Cause it is in prison where you can learn a thing or two about dignity: a smoke for the guard, a day of dignity. You're out of cigarettes, be careful when you bend over. (...) Outside, it's just the same. So take your dignity and shove it up your butt, or else other people may shove it up theirs." In order to achieve his dream of being with the gorgeous but materialistic Diana, the poor high school teacher Ovidiu engages in Pavel's shady affairs and sticks with them even after he gives Diana up, moulding himself to fit the pattern of real life and overcome the hardships of a dog-eat-dog society where honest, valuable men are not only poorly paid, but also treated with disrespect.

PSYCHOLOGY

Compassion Compassion is a powerful emotion that emphasizes man's selfless nature vs. man's selfish nature. What poor, desperate people are willing to do for money is not only disgraceful, but also terrifying. There's no compassion involved here from Pavel and his swindlers, not even a shred of humanity. A vagrant old man consents to be maimed so that he could beg for money. He bursts into a crazy laugh and agrees to have Pavel's men poke his eye out with a ping pong ball so he could claim that his "eye and leg remained at Stalingrad", and get money by arousing people's compassion. Positive values such as compassion are used by swindlers to obtain what they want, that is money, from gullible people. In this respect, the film acts like a warning that alerts us to be vigilant, to always behave and act well-informed, on our own volition and in conformity with the ethical values of society. When Ovidiu finds out Robert has deceived him by having Diana play the role of his sister, Ovidiu admits to Robert that he is not worthy of his help, but still chooses to help him out of empathy and mercy. He gets Robert into a taxi to find him a shelter for the night so he could get rid of the goons. Thus, Ovidiu has not lost his humanistic values, despite his being manipulated and swindled by Pavel, and even beaten up by Pavel's men.

Attraction/ lust Ovidiu's attraction and lust for Diana make him lose his ethical values and principles. His lust for the gorgeous young woman is, in fact, the catalyst that triggers Ovidiu's involvement with the wrong crowd, and propels him into a world of dishonesty, manipulation and selfish gain that does not suit him at all, and out of which he continuously tries to escape, but with no luck. He strives to impress the pretentious model by posing as an accomplished rich man, and by the way he looks at her from the moment he meets her, one can unfortunately mistake lust for love. The lust that Ovidiu confuses with love is hinted at from the very moment he makes acquaintance with Diana – the writing on the classroom door reads (in English) "Fuck the School" just when Diana enters the classroom. Therefore, the verb hints at the catalyst of the story, that is, Ovidiu's desire to be with Diana sexually, a thing which will never happen.

Sexuality Miruna speaks openly about her sexuality with Ovidiu. She bets Ovidiu has never met a sexually-skilled woman like her, and that is the reason for which he was lured by "pretentious bimbos". She hints at her past sexual experience, and the skills she developed as a former prostitute by saying: "Are you coming, my dear? Don't be a sap! I bet you've never met a woman who knows her stuff. Otherwise, you wouldn't have run around with such pretentious bimbos." The important thing to be noticed in this respect is that Miruna has found redemption; she gave up her promiscuous activities as a prostitute once she met Pavel and never returned to practicing them.

FLAWS

Greed Pavel's greedy nature pervades the entire story. All his actions, from the food scam to the karaoke bar scam are triggered by his greedy behavior. When he negotiates with Piedone his cut for the emotional texts he writes for the beggars, he sarcastically claims he is a compassionate man: "How much? For this money, I shouldn't even bother talking to you. Well, I've got a mother's heart, I can't help it." Obsessed with money, Pavel incites Ovidiu to engage in the scam: "Ever wonder what triggers the mechanism of compassion? ... Unless that hand that reaches out tells a story, there'll be no alms." Further on, while talking to Ovidiu, Pavel debunks the myth of begging while revealing once again his shady, greedy character: "Asking for money is not a shame. Not getting it, is." In the end of the film, Pavel picks Robert up from the street, includes him in his network of beggars, and says to the audience as he gazes at the camera: "Do you feel pity for this piece of trash? Hah! Got your money!" Once again, compassion, the opposite of greed, is one of the various ethical means by which the rich and unscrupulous take advantage of principled, kind-hearted people, such as Ovidiu.