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Oral Presentation
Archetypal Image in Film (MS 626)
Ginette Paris, PhD
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Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands
(the title itself is a good definition of Aphrodite)

Credits:

Directed by Bruno Barreto. Based on the novel by Jorge Amado. Music by Chico Buarque and Francis Hime. Starring Sonia Braga, Jose Wilker and Mauro Mendonca. (1976).

Summary:

Dona Flor is married to Vadinho, a dynamic and erotic man full of excessive qualities (drunk, violent, orgiastic and a gambler). He dies. Dona Flor is a sensual young widow who gives cooking lessons. We can have a sense of the beauty, seductive and spicy flavor of her dishes and world. She remarries the town pharmacist, Teodoro. Teodoro is the very opposite of Vadinho. He is a correct gentleman, prude, respectable, and in good financial standing. Dona Flor misses that intense fire of Vadinho, expressed in this movie by the sexuality and the passion that brings her liberation from the trap of the “feminine mystique” or from every day life. Vadinho returns from below. She tries to be faithful to her second husband, but unsuccessfully. She desires and needs both.

Themes:

Aphrodite: Dona Flor.
Beauty (giving and seeing). Sexuality. Generosity. Embracing opposites.

Dionysus: Vadinho
Passion. Excess. Intensity. God of Carnival. God of Masks. Paradox: ecstasy and horror – infinite vitality and savage destruction.
(Hermetic qualities: Communication – freedom of speech. Opportunism).

Apollo: Teodoro
Apollo: Civilized. Solid. Rational. Formal. Orderly.
(Hestian qualities: Sameness. Tradition.)

Minutes:

0:00:04 – 0:03:20

Vadinho dies.

The opening scenes show a large plaza – sense of community – and a group of men dressed with women’s clothes, phallus, and masks. (Satyrs). They are dancing carnival and singing: “the rooster misses the hen...” Vadinho suddenly dies and the festivity is silenced. Dona Flor cries.

Music (0:03:27-0:04:54)

0:05:52 – 0:08:57

Funeral

The scenes tell us what others think about Vadinho. The mask is present. Subjects such as his violence, his passion for gambling and poetry come up. At 0:07:26 – 0:07:51 we learn the cause of his death: “Actually, he was dead before he dropped. Liver and kidney shot. Heart torn to pieces. The lungs...” (Dionysus dismembered).

0:12:24/0:57:20

Dona Flor’s memory. Days of joy and days of sorrow. Selected scenes:

0: 12:25 – 0:13:26

The sensuality through food.

0:13:27 – 0:16:07

Wedding day. Sexual excitement: D. Flor is timid and gracefully seductive (Venus); Vadinho is hungry! Gentle and wild, violent and cuddly. Body and soul are mutually stirred.

0:17:46-0:18:30 (0:21:07)

Enjoying women. Collective sexuality, group emotion, group enthusiasm. Surprisingly he is there, even at the day of his wedding – madness is applauded. He needs lots of attention and he places himself in a position as a king.

“We should never forget that the Dionysiac world is, above all, a world of women. Women awaken Dionysus and bring him up” (*Dionysus* 142).

0:23:19-0:24:27

D. Flor asks Vadinho to bring her to the casino. She knows he has other women and in some way she accepts it.

0:26:22 – 0:28:28

Church. With astute and good humor (angel) Vadinho can convince the priest to give him money to gamble. He is authentic and seductive.

“Its divine intelligence holds the contradiction together” (ibid. 140).

0: 28:30-0:30:10

Nothing to lose; or a loser. Drunk and having fun. No respect. He enjoys.

0:31:00 – 0:33:10

Lawyer. Vadinho is playing the role of “protecting the deal.” He overturns the existing order. It is interesting to note that he doesn’t lie as Hermes does (yet, Dionysus and Hermes are friends). Paradox: perverse and innocent; sincerity and cynicism. He doesn’t betray his real self. He is the mask.

“If one is truly Dionysian, there is no way to know who is behind the mask, since the mask itself is a divinity, and a divinity won’t be treated like an accessory that one can hang in the closet” (*Pagan Grace* 52).

0:34:43 – 0:35:25

Violence. Tyrannical. Dual reality: madness also brings suffering and D.Flor is exhausted of the ecstasy of terror (destructive madness) and abandonment, which accompany Vadinho.

0:38:35-0:40:30

Serenade. After violence, Vadinho brings music and a necklace to Dona Flor, even when drunk. D. Flor is delighted.

0: 41:14-0:45:30

Dona Flor goes to the underworld and meets Dionisia. Baby (one of the elements of the myth of Aphrodite). The meeting with Dionisa will help her later.

(Possible connection to Persephone, Demeter, Baubo and Dionysus)

0:45:32-0:46:40

Repetitive patterns. Role-playing: orgies, drunk, casino. Life and death are intertwined.

“The rupture and terror of life are so profound because they are intoxicated with death” (*Dionysus* 137).

0:46:43-0:50:00

Dona Flor is sad, exhausted. It hurts!

0:54:19 – 0:54:54

Intensity of sex. Dona Flor in ecstasy.

0:57:20 – 0:58:26

End of reverie (memories). Back to everyday life. Grief. D. Flor talks with herself in front of the mirror and gives recipes. Sensuality and pain of loss and the feeling of being lonely.

1:00:46-1:01:17

Teodoro is in shock with the beautiful presence of Dona Flor. He is a pharmacist.

(Interesting to note: It is known that the physician's art is from Apollo. Asklepios – the healer, God of Medicine, is Apollo's son. We can also make an extension to the meaning of this word “healer” to “savior” connecting it to Dionysus. The birth of Asklepios and Dionysus is similar).

1:01:51-1:03:10

Letter – not personal. Respectful. Formal. “I am a sober man.”

1:04:07-1:05:10

Official proposal of marriage.

0:07:34 – 1:08:18

Wedding.

1:09:00 – 1:09:14 / 1:10:01-1:10:43

Even the sea is in silence. Instincts repressed. They talk about the stars. He sees Venus as the sailor's guide, but it is Dona Flor who brings Venus as the Goddess of Love.

1:10:45 – 1:14:13

Impersonal. Inside the bedroom, Teodoro is anxious (discrete) to leave the room and to make things perfect. She gives him what he needs: “you look lovely.” Sex: boring. Impersonal – it doesn't come into body.

1:15:43 – 1:16:37

He plays music. It is nice, but not a very intense music and he is not that good. She encourages: “you play well, Teodoro. That's very nice.” And we can see him congested, as “a little inflated bug.”

(Interesting: Teodoro tells a little about Orpheus. Eurydice, Orpheus' wife, is Apollo's daughter. “Orpheus is often portrayed as a renegade who fulfills an intermediary function between the chthonic, plant derived group worship of Dionysus and the more spiritual sky-oriented worship of Apollo” (“Re-Imagining as a Method for the Elucidation of Myth: The Case of Orpheus and Eurydice” 65).

1:18:05 – 1:20:43

Kitchen. White kitchen. It looks more like a laboratory. At the same time, we can also see some of Hestian qualities: Teodoro labels things and puts everything in order: “A place for everything. Everything in its place.”

Apollo: laboratory, arrogance, rationality, money.

His relation with the maid: distance – ability to discriminate, another kind of domestic tyranny.

1:20:55 – 1:22:44

Dona Flor goes to church and tells the priest she has everything she needs but she is depressed. The priest says: “Happiness is not a story. A happy life's not a novel.” From my perspective, it is clear that she has reached the boredom of Apollo/Hestia qualities -

“rationality and no story.” Then, she has a glimpse of the “angel” – right there, Dionysus (Vadinho) is back..

1:22:48 / 1:24:35-1:24:47

Party. So well organized. Formal. It is “perfect” to Teodoro. To D. Flor, it is boring. Guest sleeps.

1:26:20 / 1:31:09-1:31:30 / 1:34:27-1:35:05 / 1:35:57 / 1:36:43 / 1:37:28-1:37:45

Surprisingly, Vadinho returns from below. Naked. Dona Flor tries to be faithful to Teodoro and Vadinho “never changes”: trying to seduce Dona Flor; ridiculing Teodoro in his ordering and sameness of his sex; and, of course, Vadinho brings joy to his friends with the authenticity of his invisible presence by making sure that his lucky number 17 wins.

1:38:10 – 1:44:16

Dona Flor cannot be faithful anymore and asks Dionisia for help. Dionisia suggests to make a “work” (spell) to return Vadinho’s spirit to his place. The Afro-Brazilian ritual is prepared and it doesn’t work out with the deep truth of Dona Flor’s scream. It is Dionysus nature to appear suddenly and with overwhelming energies. Vadinho (Dionysus) disappears and reappears taking possession of their passion. They finally make love.

“With the horror which is at the same time bewitchment, with the ecstasy which is like paralysis, overpowering all natural and habitual sense perceptions, The Dreadful suddenly springs into being. And, at its greatest intensity, it is as if the insane din were in reality the profoundest of silences” (*Dionysus* 92).

1:44:38 – 1:44:59

Both husbands are on the bed. There is space for all.

“Dionysus, himself, lived in Delphi with Apollo, and it could even be seen that he not only enjoyed equal rights with him but was the actual lord of the sacred space.” (ibid. 203)

And Aphrodite (Dona Flor) permits union, melting the opposite poles.

1:45:23 –

Final. Victorious and beautiful procession: Sacred and Profane. Cheers to polytheism!

Main Music: (a hymn to Dionysus)

*What could it be
 Could it be
 That gives him no rest
 Does he want to hurt me
 Does he want to leave me
 Will this love take off the day
 Is he in bad company
 Is he a child teasing me
 And defy my desire
 Which never tires and never will*

*What could it be that never quenches our thirst
 Live being hangover after a spree
 That the 10 Commandments can't tame
 Nor any ointment relieve
 Nor all the spell cure
 Nor alchemy
 Nor saints
 Where there is no limit
 And never will
 And no ruler and never will be
 And no shame.*

*What is it
 That boils me inside, and...
 Bursts out of me, and
 Show in my face, and make me blush
 And shines in my eyes and betrays me
 And catches my breath and makes me confess
 What can hide no more
 Nor would be right to refuse
 And makes me a beggar and make me beg
 That has no measure
 Nor never will
 That has no cure
 Nor never will
 That has no end?*

*When every nerve begs
 And every fiber demands
 And my anguish makes me implore
 What has no limit and never will
 What has no ruler, and never will
 And has no shame.*

(...)

Works Cited

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