

A Ray of Light as an Act of Betrayal

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In Apuleius' myth of "Eros and Psyche"¹ there is a pivotal moment when the sexual jouissance between two lovers transforms from a divine gift to suffering. Once Psyche exposes her secret lover to the light², discovering that he is the god Eros, he vanishes. In the myth Eros falls in love with Psyche, by chance, through an incident: he accidentally pricks himself with his own arrow while trying to strike her and make her fall in love with him, thereby producing suffering in her, in accordance with the demand given by his mother, Aphrodite.

Why does Eros leave at the moment of exposure? While he allows her to hear his voice and touch his body, he forbids her from seeing him. On one level, it concerns the divine law and the betrayal in relation to his mother's demand. On the other hand, no sign of love can operate without a lack, as there is no greater gift of what one has not. What intervenes in the love relationship, what is asked for as a sign of love, is only ever something that carries worth merely as a sign.³ In the moment Psyche signifies ἔρως⁴ for him, it marks the radical rupture. Jouissance is lost, as the transference of love cannot function where there is no lack. Eros, being a god, bears no lack. The only possibility is that of union based exclusively on jouissance. As Jacques-Alain Miller states, *not being able to rely on a signifying rapport at the sexual level, the couple relies on a relation at the level of jouissance*.⁵

Lacan posits that the non-existence of the sexual relation is bridged by love, which functions as a transference—an attempt to bridge an inherent lack. However, on Mount Olympus, the sexual relation seems to exist.⁶ The act of revelation by Psyche disrupts this order: through the gaze, she not only reveals the god Eros but also exposes her own lack, unfolding the question of her desire. This act and its effect resonate with Lacan's statement that "the word kills the thing"⁷; Psyche's lighting of the

¹ Berens, E. M. *Myths and Legends of Ancient Greece and Rome*, Glasgow, William Collins, 2016, p. 142.

² Amor and Psyche (1589). Oil on canvas, 173 x 130 cm (68.1 x 51.1 in). Galleria Borghese, Rome (https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/0/08/Jacopo_Zucchi_-_Amor_and_Psyche.jpg)

³ Lacan, J., *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book IV: The Object Relation*, trans. A. R. Price, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2020, p. 132.

⁴ In ancient Greek, the participle of the word ἔρως is erōmenos (the beloved), the one that contains the object of love/desire.

⁵ Miller, J. A., *Analysis Laid Bare*, trans. A. Duncan, New York, Lacanian Press, 2023 p. 70.

⁶ Fort Da, Περιοδικό Λακανικής Κλινικής, τεύχος 4ο, Φερνάντες Ντανιέλα, Ψυχή και Ανταλί- Δυο γυναίκες που βλέπουν υπερβολικά, εκδ. Ψυχογιός, Αθήνα Οκτώβριος 2017, σελ. 138. [Journal of Lacanian Clinic, issue 4, Fernandes Daniela, Psyche and Antaly - Two women who see too much, Athens, Psychogios Publishing, October 2017, p. 138].

⁷ Quoted by Miller J. A. article: *A Contribution of the Schizophrenic to the Psychoanalytic Clinic*, trans. E. Ragland and A. Pulis, *The Symptom*, Issue 2, Spring 2002. Online at <https://www.lacan.com/contributionf.htm>.

candle can be seen as a metaphor for the hysteric's desire to reveal the lack in the Other; however, the Other, being a god, does not lack.

The myth brings to the fore the question of the primal fantasy as the foundation of the subject's relationship with the object of desire. It highlights the impossibility of fully conquering this object, emphasising the deceptive nature of the erotic bond.

Psyche loses her divine jouissance in the attempt to signify what cannot be signified—the object that causes her desire, and precisely for this reason, she must lose it. Her betrayal was a risk taken in search of the signifier. Eros' pain follows this attempt. By being signified as an immortal god, the metaphor of love can't function in the place where there is no lack. A structural paradox, the god of love cannot love.

In this context, it is not surprising that Patricia Bosquin-Caroz, in her argument for the upcoming congress, refers to painful love as inherently unhappy love.