

Hades and Persephone: The symbolic elaboration of romantic separation from the perspective of Analytical Psychology

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Abstract

This article is grounded in Analytical Psychology, which employs the Greek myth of Hades and Persephone as an interpretive framework to reflect on the ending of romantic relationships. Myths are understood as archetypal expressions of the collective unconscious, capable of offering symbolic pathways for the elaboration of experiences of loss, grief, and transformation. Through a literature review and the comparative method, narrative elements of the abduction, the descent into the underworld, and the return to the surface are articulated with the emotional dynamics present in affective rupture, understood as symbolic death and an opportunity for psychic rebirth. The analysis highlights aspects related to individuation, projection, and the integration of the shadow, indicating that the symbolic reading of the myth facilitates the re-signification of pain and emotional maturation. Persephone's journey, in which she returns from the underworld transformed into a queen, is taken as a metaphor for the reunion with the Self after separation, revealing the end of a relationship as an archetypal rite of passage. ■

Keywords: relationship, analytical psychology, analytical psychotherapy, Greek mythology.

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Hades e Perséfone: A elaboração simbólica da separação amorosa a partir da Psicologia Analítica

Resumo

Este artigo é fundamentado na Psicologia Analítica, que utiliza o mito grego de Hades e de Perséfone como eixo interpretativo para refletir sobre o término de relacionamentos amorosos. Considera-se que os mitos constituem expressões arquetípicas do inconsciente coletivo, capazes de oferecer caminhos simbólicos para a elaboração de experiências de perda, de luto e de transformação. Por meio da revisão de literatura e do método comparativo, articulam-se elementos narrativos do rapto, da descida ao submundo e do retorno à superfície com dinâmicas emocionais presentes na ruptura afetiva, compreendendo-a como morte simbólica e como oportunidade de renascimento psíquico. A análise destaca aspectos relacionados à individuação, às projeções e à integração da sombra, indicando que a leitura simbólica do mito favorece a resignificação da dor e o amadurecimento emocional. A trajetória de Perséfone, que retorna do submundo transformada em rainha, é tomada como metáfora do reencontro com o Self após o rompimento, apontando o término amoroso como rito de passagem arquetípico. ■

Palavras-chave: relacionamento, psicologia analítica, psicoterapia analítica, mitologia grega.

Hades y Perséfone: La elaboración simbólica de la separación romántica desde una perspectiva de la Psicología Analítica

Resumen

Este artículo se fundamenta en la Psicología Analítica, que utiliza el mito griego de Hades y Perséfone como marco interpretativo para reflexionar sobre el fin de las relaciones románticas. Considera que los mitos constituyen expresiones arquetípicas del inconsciente colectivo, capaces de ofrecer caminos simbólicos para procesar experiencias de pérdida, duelo y transformación. A través de la revisión bibliográfica y el método comparativo, se articulan los elementos narrativos del rapto, el descenso al inframundo y el regreso a la superficie con las dinámicas emocionales presentes en la ruptura afectiva, entendiéndola como muerte simbólica y como oportunidad para el renacimiento psíquico. El análisis destaca aspectos relacionados con la individuación, las proyecciones y la integración de la sombra, indicando que la lectura simbólica del mito favorece la resignificación del dolor y la maduración emocional. La trayectoria de Perséfone, quien regresa del inframundo transformada en reina, se toma como metáfora del reencuentro con uno mismo tras la ruptura, señalando la ruptura romántica como un rito de paso arquetípico. ■

Palabras claves: relación, psicología analítica, psicoterapia analítica, mitología griega.

Introduction

Romantic separations, although common to human experience, mobilize intense psychic and emotional movements that often disrupt an individual's identity and life trajectory. The end of a

relationship involves not only mourning the loss of the other, but also the dismantling of ideals, expectations, and unconscious images projected onto the partner. From the perspective of Analytical Psychology, this moment of rupture can be understood as a liminal experience — a symbolic space

situated between the death of what once was and the emergence of what has not yet become, often represented in myths of descent, symbolic death, and psychic rebirth.

Among the many myths that express this dynamic, the narrative of Hades and Persephone stands out as an archetypal image of the crossing between worlds, the encounter with the shadow, and the reintegration of psychic totality. The myth recounts the transformation of Kore — the maiden — into Persephone — the queen of the underworld — through her coexistence with Hades, the god of the lower world. Although traditionally interpreted as an abduction, the myth gains new depth when approached from a symbolic perspective. Upon descending into Hades, Persephone not only separates from the maternal figure and the solar world, but also enters a profound individuation process in which she assumes her sovereignty and reconstructs her identity (Woolger & Woolger, 1997).

In this context, the myth provides an effective symbolic language for understanding the subjective processes triggered by the end of a romantic relationship. Much like Persephone's descent, romantic separation calls the individual to face pain, shadow, loneliness, and the forgotten aspects of the self. As Cipriano and Souza emphasize, "we go through cyclical descents and ascents, filled with sufferings and victories, as portrayed in the myth [...] thus allowing the emergence of the wisdom that results from diving into one's own wounds." (2024, p. 15).

This article aims to analyze the myth of Hades and Persephone as a symbolic resource for understanding and processing the end of a romantic relationship. To do so, it proposes to follow the mythical trajectory of the couple, exploring their relational dynamics in the light of Analytical Psychology, distinguishing elements of healthy emotional bonds from those present in toxic relationships. The intention is to understand the ending not as failure or defeat, but as an archetypal rite of passage — a painful yet fertile crossing toward greater consciousness, emotional autonomy, and reconnection with the self.

Methodology

The development of this article is based on a theoretical and symbolic literature review, combined with the application of the comparative method, widely used in the human and social sciences since the nineteenth century. This methodological approach allows for the confrontation of cultural and psychological data, seeking to identify structural similarities and differences in meaning between mythic narratives and contemporary psychic phenomena.

For Jung (2000b/1954), the comparison between mythological content and contemporary unconscious dynamics is more than a search for illustrative parallels: it is a process of symbolic amplification, in which the symbol is explored in its multiplicity of meanings and historically contextualized. As Santos and Serbena (2017) point out, through a central theme, symbolic reasoning unfolds into images, analogies, and comparisons, employing elements from various areas of the human sciences — such as art, mythology, and religion — to support its elaboration. From this perspective, archetypes manifest as expressions of the collective unconscious. For Jung, the comparative method applied to myths contributes significantly to understanding the human psyche, as it reveals the presence of common symbolic structures across different cultures (2011/1912, p. 45, § 28). This perspective reinforces the notion that the collective unconscious possesses a creative and generative core, capable of producing universal images that express deep psychic content.

The trajectory of the myth: from archaic origins to contemporaneity

The trajectory of myth follows the very history of human consciousness. Since the earliest periods of humanity, mythic narratives have emerged as symbolic forms of interpreting existence, explaining natural phenomena, and giving meaning to inner and collective experiences. In archaic societies, myth was integrated into everyday life as a sacred and operative truth. It was not conceived as invention, but as an expression of a profound reality, transmitted through orality, rituals, and symbolic images.

Mircea Eliade (2001) emphasizes that in traditional cultures, myth had a foundational function: it narrated how the world was created, how the gods acted, and how human beings should behave to maintain cosmic balance. This sacred dimension of myth provided an orienting axis for life, ensuring social cohesion, identity, and continuity. Mythic time was cyclical, eternal, and regenerative, contrasting with the modern notion of historical linearity.

With the advent of writing and the rise of the first organized civilizations, myths began to be systematized in texts such as the Homeric poems in Greece, the Popol Vuh among the Maya, and the Mesopotamian epics like Gilgamesh. In this process, myths came to coexist with emerging philosophical rationality. While mythology sought meaning through image and metaphor, nascent philosophy sought logical and conceptual explanations. The split between myth (mythos) and reason (logos) deepened in classical Greek thought, especially with Plato, who relegated myths to the realm of pedagogical fiction (Vernant, 1990).

However, even when marginalized by rationalism, myth continued to manifest in various cultural expressions. During the Middle Ages, Christian myths — narratives of creation, fall, salvation, and apocalypse — replaced pagan myths, fulfilling a similar function: to give meaning to human life and provide moral orientation. Modernity, in turn, was characterized by a profound demythologization of the world, describing the process of “disenchantment” of reality, in which myths were replaced by science, technique, and instrumental rationality (Weber, 2004).

Yet myth did not disappear; it transformed and adapted to new cultural imaginaries. Analytical Psychology rescues its psychological value by emphasizing that mythic images are not mere relics of the past but continuously emerge from the collective unconscious as symbols that express universal human experiences. Thus, myths constitute living archetypal languages, manifesting in dreams, artistic narratives, religions, literature, and contemporary mass culture. Essentially, myth is a symbolic narrative that reveals deep psychic truths, acting as a powerful organizer of meaning capable of translating the ineffable aspects

of human experience into images accessible to consciousness. Serbena (2010, p. 5) highlights that myth is not an arbitrary creation of fantasy, but an archetypal elaboration: “Myth is the beginning of the rationalization of symbolic experience in narrative form [...], in which symbols are translated into words, and archetypes into ideas, concepts, thought schemas, and rational worldviews.”

As Campbell (2007) points out, myths are “public dreams,” structured by archetypes that recur symbolically across different cultures and eras, offering individuals an existential map for facing transitions, losses, and rebirths.

The function of myth, therefore, is not restricted to explaining the external world but extends to organizing inner life. According to Eliade (2001), myth places the subject in contact with “primordial time,” offering a symbolic experience that reconnects the individual with the foundations of their existence. In a psychological context, this reconnection operates as a pathway for restoring a wounded identity, especially in the face of traumatic events such as the end of a romantic relationship. By symbolizing suffering, myth enables the individual to undertake the psychic passage of mourning and the reconfiguration of the self.

Campbell (2007) proposed that myth fulfills four functions: the mystical, which awakens the sense of the mystery of existence; the cosmological, which explains the order of the universe; the sociological, which sustains cultural structures and values; and the pedagogical, which guides the subject through the stages of life. This last function is particularly relevant when applied to the process of romantic separation, as it provides symbolic narratives that help individuals navigate emotional chaos and construct a new storyline for their lives.

Through myth, it becomes possible to access archetypal images that represent death and rebirth, losses and transformations. In the myth of Hades and Persephone, for example, the descent into the underworld and the return to the surface constitute a symbolic cycle of rupture and reintegration, which can be understood as a psychic model for facing the end of emotional bonds. The myth offers not only

consolation but also structure for suffering, converting pain into a rite of passage.

Thus, understanding myths is not an exercise in retrieving the past but a way of listening to the deep language of the soul. Myth restores the link between collective narrative and subjective drama, enabling individuals not merely to survive losses but to transmute them into a movement of self-knowledge and transformation.

Hades and Persephone from the Perspective of Greek Myth

In ancient Greek culture, the world of the dead had a king and a queen: Hades and Persephone. Portrayed in the *Theogony* as the son of Cronus and Rhea, Hades had five siblings: Demeter, Hera, Hestia, Poseidon, and Zeus. Hades and his siblings were swallowed by their father, except for Zeus. Later, they would unite to fight against the Titans. Once the battle was concluded, the underworld was allotted to Hades, where he came to perform the role of god of the dead.

During his silent rule in the depths of the earth, Hades rarely became involved with the world of the living. However, one day, while passing through a fissure located between the underworld and the surface, he saw Kore, daughter of Zeus and Demeter — and therefore Hades's niece — gathering flowers in a field. Hades, without revealing his feelings to Olympus, sought out Zeus, who, according to some versions of the myth, consented to his plans.

On the day of the abduction, Zeus caused a charming narcissus, whose singular beauty captures Kore's attention, to appear among the flowers she was gathering. As she bends down to pick it, the earth suddenly opens, and Hades bursts forth from the depths in a golden chariot drawn by immortal horses. Before she can react, he seizes her and takes her with him against her will. Kore cries out for help, invoking her father's name, but her pleas go unheard. Only Hecate, goddess of magic and crossroads, hears her lament, though she is unable to see Kore. Helios, the sun god, witnesses the abduction and later reveals what happened to Demeter.

Desperate, the goddess of the harvest begins an unrelenting search for her daughter, wandering the earth with flaming torches in both hands. For nine days and nights, Demeter refuses food and rest, consumed by grief. On the tenth day, Hecate meets her and shares what she heard. Together they seek out Helios, who confirms the truth: Kore was taken by Hades with Zeus's consent.

Overwhelmed by fury and sorrow, Demeter leaves Olympus and takes the form of an old woman, traveling to the city of Eleusis. There, she is welcomed by the royal family and, in gratitude, promises to make the young prince Demophon immortal. However, when she attempts to purify him in fire, she is interrupted by Queen Metaneira. Demeter then reveals her divine identity and demands that a temple be built for her in Eleusis, where she remains secluded, refusing to allow the earth to bear fruit until her daughter is returned.

With the earth plunged into famine and humans suffering, Zeus sends Hermes to the underworld to negotiate with Hades. He agrees to return Kore, but before doing so, he offers her pomegranate seeds. By eating them, even in small quantity, Kore seals her bond with the world of the dead. An agreement is then established: she will spend part of the year with her mother and the other part with Hades. This eternal cycle symbolizes the seasons of the year. When Persephone is with Demeter, the earth blooms in abundance; when she returns to the underworld, nature falls asleep, descending into winter.

The Homeric Hymn does not recount what occurred between Kore and Hades during the time she remained "missing" in the underworld. What is known is that, after this period, she is no longer called Kore — the maiden — but becomes Persephone, queen of the dead.

Persephone had to quite literally enter the underworld. Authors such as Koltuv (1990) argue that she accepted the pomegranate and its seeds because she recognized that, in that moment with Hades, she was no longer the same. Many authors condemn Hades for being the "monster" who took Kore from Demeter, destroying such a beautiful mother-daughter bond. However, few perceive

Hades as the agent of Persephone's transformation. Woolger and Woolger (1997) state that:

The true savior is not Zeus but, paradoxically, Zeus's dark brother, Hades. The wisdom of this extraordinary myth is that Persephone's source of transformation comes from below, from the abyssal depths of the soul, not from the highest reaches of the spirit (p. 190).

Despite his importance, Hades is the least present god in Greek myths and, when he does appear, it is in very specific situations, such as in the Homeric hymn which recounts the abduction of Persephone: the focus is placed more on her than on Hades himself (Barbosa, 2012), who abducted her.

Alvarenga (2010) notes that Hades left the underworld only twice: the first time, to abduct Kore, whom he married. The second time was due to an injury sustained in a fight with Heracles, who, in fulfilling one of his labors, was attempting to capture the dog Cerberus at the command of his cousin Eurystheus. In the conflict, Hades' right shoulder was struck by an arrow poisoned with the venom of the Lernaean Hydra. The pain was so intense that the god of the dead sought Apollo's assistance to heal his wound.

The realm of Hades was composed of five rivers: Acheron (sorrow), Cocytus (lamentation), Phlegethon (fire), Lethe (forgetfulness), and Styx (hatred).

The Styx marked the boundary between the world of the living and the underworld. The Acheron, known as the river of pain, constituted the pathway through which souls entered Hades. The Cocytus, associated with lamentation, reflected the suffering of souls in transit. The Phlegethon, identified as the river of fire, symbolized punishment and torment in the deeper regions of the underworld. In the Lethe, ordinary souls drank from its waters to erase the memory of their previous existence.

In front of the palace of Hades and his wife Persephone sat the three judges of the underworld — Minos, Rhadamanthus, and Aeacus — at a crossroads consecrated to the goddess Hecate. In this place, souls were judged: those who were neither good nor evil returned to the Asphodel Meadows;

the wicked were sent to Tartarus; and the virtuous were guided to the Elysian Fields to join heroes and noble souls.

It was Hades who enabled Kore to become a strong and independent woman and who allowed her to assume the position of queen of the underworld, ruling over the spirits of the dead at his side. Hades represents the end of the life cycle and, therefore, the beginning of a new stage.

Healthy Relationship vs. Toxic Relationship

The quality of affective bonds represents one of the most significant elements of psychological health and of the individuation process. In a context of high idealization of romantic love, understanding the dynamics that sustain healthy relationships, in contrast with toxic ones, is essential for the emotional elaboration of breakups and for the subjective reconstruction of the individual after separation.

Healthy affective relationships are built on reciprocity, clear communication, and the appreciation of individuality. They are bonds in which there is respect for each partner's psychic boundaries, openness to dialogue, and mutual support in the face of life's challenges. According to Emma Jung (2003), the possibility of intimate coexistence with another person requires ongoing self-reflection and a willingness to confront the unconscious aspects mobilized by the relationship. In this sense, loving consciously is a continuous psychological task.

Within the framework of Analytical Psychology, a healthy relationship supports the integration of internal polarities. Intimate coexistence offers opportunities to project and recognize unconscious aspects of one's own psyche — such as the shadow, the anima, or the animus — provided there is willingness for self-knowledge and for confronting one's limitations. Jung (2011) emphasizes that the true encounter with the other is only possible when the subject is willing to differentiate themselves from their own projections.

Toxic relationships, on the other hand, are structured around emotional dependence, manipulation, and subjective devaluation. These relationships tend

toward psychic symbiosis, in which the individual loses themselves while attempting to sustain the relationship at any cost. Such relationships frequently involve patterns of domination, pathological jealousy, emotional blackmail, and control, all of which undermine the partner's autonomy and sense of identity.

In the language of Analytical Psychology, affective bonds are often shaped by unconscious repetitions linked to unresolved complexes. When these relationships are sustained by archetypal projections, there is a risk of confusing the idealized image with the real partner, leading to frustration and the collapse of the relationship. As Rocha points out, projections "result not only in the succession of the individual's internal conflicts, but may increasingly hinder social interaction, since projection leads to aggressive measures by preventing each subject from seeing the real other and themselves." (2017, p. 41). The difficulty in distinguishing the real person from the symbolic figure projected onto them perpetuates suffering and prevents the development of a conscious relationship.

According to Bauman (2004), in the liquid relationships of contemporary society, the fragility of bonds makes relationships permeable, insecure, and anxious. While stability and connection are desired, there is simultaneously fear of vulnerability and commitment, creating relationships marked by ambivalence and fear of loss.

The end of a romantic relationship — especially when marked by toxic elements — can be experienced as a moment of symbolic death. It represents the dismantling of shared projects, the loss of the other invested with idealizations, and, often, the need to reconstruct the self. According to Hillman (1993), it is in the collapse of familiar forms of life that the soul finds an opening for new meaning.

A breakup can be understood as an archetypal stage of the psychic journey — a descent into the inner world, symbolized widely in myths such as that of Persephone. Separation, although painful, carries within it the seed of rebirth, provided that suffering is welcomed and transformed into meaning. Jung (2013) highlights that confronting pain and solitude can ignite the individuation process, in which

the subject ceases to seek completeness in the other and begins to build a more authentic relationship with themselves.

Thus, rather than a failure, a breakup can be seen as a passage — a necessary transition between disillusionment and the re-centering of one's psychic axis. When the subject understands the unconscious dynamics that sustained the relationship and embraces mourning with symbolic awareness, an inner space opens for the birth of new meanings and new ways of loving.

Hades and Persephone — A myth of individuation and return to the self after a romantic breakup

In ancient Greek tradition, the union between Hades and Persephone symbolizes not only the cycle of the seasons or the transition from innocence to maturity, but — through the lens of Analytical Psychology — it represents the archetypal journey of the ego toward the Self. This myth can be understood as a profound metaphor for the transformation that occurs after the end of a romantic relationship. For many, a breakup is a symbolic descent into the underworld, a confrontation with loss, solitude, and emptiness. Yet, just like Persephone, it is through this plunge into the depths of the psyche that one may emerge more whole, more conscious, and closer to one's own essence.

The descent into the underworld as a symbolic death of idealized love

According to Hesiod's Theogony, Persephone — formerly called Kore — was the maiden daughter of Demeter and Zeus. While she was picking flowers, she was suddenly abducted by Hades, who burst forth from the earth and carried her into the underworld. Although this image can be read literally as an act of violence, symbolically it represents an abrupt rupture with the soul's childlike state the phase in which love is lived in an idealized, fused, and unconscious manner.

The abduction, in this sense, manifests as an experience not chosen by the ego but imposed by the

archetypal dynamics of the psyche. It is a movement that escapes conscious control and acts as a transformative force, destabilizing the psychic structures that sustained a previous identity. For Jung (2011), every individuation process requires a descent into the unconscious, a confrontation with the shadow. Kore's abduction, therefore, is not merely a mythical event but a metaphor for the ego's collapse in the face of the eruption of the unconscious — the beginning of a journey of transformation. "Individuation begins with the collapse and dissolution of a life-image that previously sustained the ego. It is the loss of an identity based on the persona" (Edinger, 1991, p. 45).

The end of a romantic relationship can be precisely this collapse: when the bond dissolves, the ego — deprived of the loved object — is compelled to descend into the depths of its own psyche. What emerges from this descent is not only pain but the opportunity to confront shadowy contents, wounds, and projections previously denied. When one is seized by the unconscious, just as Kore is taken by Hades, the individual is guided — often against their will — toward an encounter with previously unknown aspects of themselves.

Upon arriving in the underworld, Kore undergoes a process of transformation. What occurs between her and Hades is not described in detail in the Homeric hymns, but the symbolism suggests that this coexistence transforms her. It is the encounter with Hades — archetype of the shadow, of endings, of what is forgotten — that allows her to integrate previously denied aspects of herself.

For Jung, "the autonomy of the collective unconscious is expressed in the figures of the anima and the animus. They personify its contents, which may be integrated into consciousness once they are withdrawn from projection." (2000a, p. 36, § 40). Genuine loving coexistence requires precisely this confrontation with what one once avoided. Therefore, the relationship between Hades and Persephone can be understood as healthy in its archetypal form: it does not demand that she wear a mask, but allows her to become what she truly is — a woman who rules over the dead, conscious of both life and death.

In this sense, the myth offers a powerful image of romantic recovery. The end of a relationship can function as a "symbolic abduction," forcing the individual to descend into their depths, face their abysses, re-signify their pain, and emerge strengthened. The Self, as the organizing center of the psyche, can only be accessed when the ego relinquishes its idealizations and confronts its inner truth (Neumann, 1995).

By accepting the pomegranate seeds, Persephone seals her bond with the underworld — not as a prisoner, but as a queen. She now moves between worlds, dividing her time between her mother, symbol of fertile life, and her husband, symbol of the deep psychic realm. This cyclical movement is the image of the integration of opposites: consciousness and unconscious, light and shadow, life and death.

From a therapeutic perspective, a romantic breakup can be experienced as this passage. When the loss is symbolically elaborated, suffering becomes fertile soil for self-knowledge. Mourning, in this case, is a crossing: the ego sheds its previous form so that a new identity may emerge. "The soul expands in direct proportion to its capacity to bear the pain of transformation" (Hillman, 1993, p. 112).

The myth of Hades and Persephone teaches us, therefore, that to love is not to seek salvation in the other, but to recognize that true encounter only occurs when each person can be who they are. Hades does not demand that Persephone return to the role of daughter, and Persephone does not try to turn him into a solar being. They recognize one another in their alterity and share the throne of night, governing the symbolic world of the soul.

In the myth, Persephone does not return to be the same. She is no longer merely a daughter — she is a queen. Likewise, the individual who elaborates a romantic breakup through symbolic listening emerges with a new psychic configuration. The ego matures as it ceases to seek completeness in the other and begins to build a more authentic relationship with itself.

Bolen (1990), in her study of feminine archetypes, describes Persephone as the goddess of initiation, transformation, and reconnection with the unconscious. She states: "The woman who moves through pain and accepts the darkness within

herself becomes the mistress of her own destiny” (p. 132). This also applies to men and to anyone who, after a breakup, must make peace with their pain and return to their inner axis.

Thus, the myth indicates that every true romantic breakup is an opportunity to return to oneself. It is the moment when the individual stops living according to the projections placed upon the other and begins to integrate within themselves what they once sought externally. Like Persephone emerging from the depths, the individual may carry not only the pain of loss, but the wisdom gained through the crossing.

Conclusion

Overcoming the end of a romantic relationship — especially when it mobilizes deep psychic projections — is not a linear process, nor one free of suffering. From the perspective of Analytical Psychology, this experience can be understood as an archetypal journey: a symbolic descent akin to Persephone’s into the underworld, where the pain of rupture summons inner transformation. The myth of Hades and Persephone, far from being merely a narrative of abduction or submission, reveals itself as a symbolic model of relational individuation, in which the encounter with the Self occurs precisely through the crossing of pain, solitude, and shadow. The silence of the myth is not an absence, but a fertile space for symbolic imagination.

From this symbolic perspective, it is possible to propose four psychic stages for overcoming a romantic breakup, inspired by the trajectory of Hades and Persephone:

Rupture as a call to descend

Just as the earth opens for Persephone, the end of a relationship breaks the emotional ground of the individual, exposing fragilities, dependencies, and idealized images. This first stage is marked by suffering, shock, and the collapse of the relational persona. It is the moment to accept the call to descend, rather than resist or deny the pain — allowing oneself to mourn without haste.

The encounter with the shadow and the inner other

In the underworld, Persephone meets Hades, archetype of the deep unconscious. At this moment, the individual begins to confront aspects of themselves that were denied or projected onto the partner: fears, traumas, unmet needs. Coexisting with the pain allows for the recognition of the shadow and the complexes activated by the relationship. Here the process of differentiation begins: the other ceases to be blamed or idealized and becomes understood as a mirror of one’s own psyche.

The symbolic choice: eating the pomegranate and accepting the bond with the experience

Accepting the pomegranate seeds, as Persephone does, symbolizes the integration of the experience: there is no erasing the pain or denying the story. Instead, one chooses to assume the experience as part of one’s psychological maturation. Pain is no longer a passive burden but symbolic material to be metabolized.

The return with awareness and autonomy

Finally, just as Persephone returns to the surface as queen, the individual who consciously crosses the mourning process emerges with a new psychic structure. There is greater clarity regarding desires, boundaries, and self-esteem. The person stops seeking fulfillment in the other and begins cultivating a more authentic relationship with themselves. This stage does not imply forgetting the love, but transforming it into inner wisdom. The relationship with the past is reconciled, and the future opens with more freedom and presence.

Therefore, the crossing of a romantic breakup, seen through the myth of Hades and Persephone, reveals itself as a symbolic rite of passage: from pain to awareness, from dependence to psychic sovereignty, from the idealization of the other to the rediscovery of the Self. It is in this journey between worlds — between love and loss, light and shadow, surface and depth — that the true path of individuation is built. ■

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