

The third sign of the zodiac is so often misunderstood and trivialised. In this article Brian Clark talks about the potent feelings of loss and disconnection that often underlay the nervous and agile temperament of Gemini. A longer version of this article appeared in the June/July 2000 edition of The Mountain Astrologer. Visit their website at www.mountainastrologer.com/.

GEMINI: Searching for the Missing Twin

*“I wish you wouldn’t keep appearing
And vanishing so suddenly
You make one quite giddy!”*

- Lewis Carroll

Clients with planetary placements in Gemini, who strongly evoked the Geminian theme, helped me reconstruct my ideas of this archetype. My textbook understanding of the nervous, non-committed, chain-smoking superficial gossip, who had her mobile phone surgically removed from her ear, was deconstructed listening to the experience of grief and loss, which so often underpinned the Geminian placements clients were describing. Gemini suggests the first encounter with an equal, the awareness of another (a loved one or perhaps a rival), and the first conscious experience of being separate, experienced early in the familial environs. The pain of Gemini is borne from a severed connection to an ancient memory of being whole.

Gemini and its derivative, the third house, and its ruler, Mercury, constellate the archetype of the sibling and contain the myriad of ways we can experience this primal relationship. Its representatives are the twins, commonly Castor and Pollux, although other sets of twins have also been associated with this sign.ⁱ The twins are an archetypal pair whose myths permeate each astrological symbol connected to the sign Gemini, a potent storehouse for our earlier experiences with our siblings.ⁱⁱ Twin stories depict the range of feeling in the sibling relationship from enmeshment through to estrangement, and consistently reveal the themes of

duality, sacrifice, separation, loss and a searching for the other. Looking behind the bright stars of Gemini could reveal a more poignant side of the archetype.

The Two Bright Stars of Gemini

*“You Muses,
with your bright eyes
tell us about the sons of Zeus,
the Tyndaridae
those great children of Leda:
Castor
who tamed horses
and Pollux
a man without fault”ⁱⁱⁱ*
-Homeric Hymn to the Dioscuri

Helen stood on the walls of Troy and looked out over the battlefields where her husband’s brother, Agamemnon, had assembled the finest army from all regions of Greece. Priam, Troy’s patriarch and the father of Paris, who had brought Helen to the foreign shores of Troy, stood beside her. He asked Helen to describe the valiant Greek warriors that she could see on the battle plains below. Helen ‘the shining among women’^{iv} was married to Menelaus, the king of Sparta, before Paris came to claim her and bring her back to Troy, his prize for choosing Aphrodite as the fairest. Therefore she knew the Greek generals encamped on the plains below Troy, as he had entertained them in her home. But as she perused the battlefield, listing these generals for Priam, she could not see her own twin brothers, Castor and Polydeuces.^v

It was unusual for her brothers not to be amongst the Greek army. Her brothers had rescued Helen when she was much younger, and had been abducted by Theseus. Her twin brothers were also part of the heroic legion that went with Jason on the earlier quest for the Golden Fleece^{vi} and also participated in the hunt for the Calydonian Boar. They were known for their skills as warriors, hence Helen was surprised that

she was not able to view her twin brothers participating in the army that assembled below the walls of Troy; an army that had come to rescue her from Troy and her abductor, Paris. Helen had been absent from Sparta for the ten years the war dragged on. She did not know that tragedy had struck her twin brothers, and Fate had sealed their destiny, just as Fate was now dictating hers.

Castor and Polydeuces, more commonly known by the Latin Pollux, were beloved by both Gods and mortals. They were known as the Dioscuri, the sons of Zeus, referring to an earlier version of the myth where both were divine heroic sons of the sky god Zeus, as suggested in the Homeric Hymn to the Dioscuri. However by later classical times the twins Castor and Pollux were known to have originated from a more complex family atmosphere. This version of the myth, while not necessarily the oldest account, became the popular version.

Their parents were Leda and Tyndareus, the Queen and King of Sparta. Zeus admired Leda and to seduce her, he shape shifted into a swan. Hermes then pursued him in the guise of an eagle. Trickster Hermes colluded with Zeus to drive the swan into the safety of the Queen's embrace and in this form, Zeus ravaged her. Leda then bore two giant eggs, having been impregnated by both Zeus and her husband Tyndareus. From one egg emerged Helen and Pollux, the divine progeny of Zeus, and from the other, Castor and Clytemnestra, the human offspring of Tyndareus. Here the duplicity of twinship is stretched into various possibilities. One set of twins is divine; the other set is mortal. One set of twins is male; the other, female. One set of twins is male-female, divine-mortal, as is the other set. This duplicated genealogy is an integral part of the myth that inspires the constellation of Gemini, formed around the two bright

stars of Castor and Pollux. For all appearances Castor and Pollux are equal, yet their fate is different. Their destiny is not the same. They must learn how to separate. This complex constellation of ‘others’ at birth and the ultimate loss of this connection become the fate that underlies the experience of Gemini^{vii}. Both sets of twins also carry the complexity of the sibling enmeshment into their adult relationships. Helen and Clytemnestra marry the brothers, Menelaus and Agamemnon. Castor and Pollux also marry sisters, their twin cousins. (Here we are reminded that the early imprints and patterns of our sibling relationship are often recreated with adult partners.)

When Paris, under the direction of Aphrodite, arrived in the homeland of Helen in order to seduce and lure her back to Troy, the twin brothers graciously made him feel welcome in their homeland. Soon after Paris’ arrival the twins left to attend the marriages of another pair of twins, their cousins Idas and Lynceus. Before the wedding had even taken place, Castor and Pollux abducted the twin’s prospective brides, another set of twins, carrying them off and claiming them as their own. From vase representations of this abduction scene, both Aphrodite and Zeus were present when the twin sisters were abducted from the sacred precinct of Aphrodite.^{viii} Both the goddess of love/sexual passion and the god of order are conscious of what is taking place and perhaps have even blessed the union. The twin bond, which is also a metaphor for the sibling and other equal relationships, is also imbued with both erotic and rivalrous undertones. The twin’s prospective brides, a pair of female twin cousins, were daughters of Tyndareus’ half-brother. Themes of familial entanglements and enmeshment are common in the Geminian story. The sisters were possibly lunar deities, as each was named for a phase of the Moon: Phoibe, ‘the pure’ and Hilaeira, ‘the serene’^{ix}. The solar twin heroes find their feminine lunar

counterparts, however not separately. Another set of twins, the Olympians Apollo and Artemis, became associated with the luminaries in late antiquity. Apollo and Artemis were devoted to each other. Astrologically we often underestimate the twin story that underpins the Sun and the Moon.

Gemini's myth is staged in a complex atmosphere of duality and twinning. Castor and Pollux are fused together making separation difficult. They marry twins who they have abducted from their cousins, who are also twins. Their stories are so intertwined that separateness is obliterated. Each twin engages in a similar pattern of relationship, whether it is an intimate or a rivalrous one. Whilst bonded in this state of symbiosis, they cannot see anyone else, only each other's reflection.

Ironically while Castor and Pollux are abducting the betrothed sisters of their cousins, their own sister is being 'stolen' from them. The myth also demonstrates that the consequence of the twin's enmeshment is the arrival of an outsider or shadow figure, embodied by Paris. The family is forever altered as a sibling takes a partner for now the sibling and family constellations are joined with another ancestral line. Each of the siblings in the system are now confronted with the loss of their relationship and are affected by the reality that the sibling is leaving home and entering the world of adult relationship. The family as it was can never be again. One way to deal with the emergent shadow feelings is to cast them onto the sibling's partner and family: unresolved sibling issues can be transferred onto the sibling-in-law. Likewise feelings too difficult or unable to be expressed to the sibling can be directed towards the sibling's partner.

Another version suggests the two sets of twins (Castor-Pollux and Idas-Lynceus) conflict over the equal division of a herd of cattle. All four have successfully raided a neighbouring territory and returned with a large herd of cattle. Conflict arises over the theme of possession (the sphere of Taurus), which foreshadows the Geminian experience of loss and separation. Both sets of twins battle with each other. During the conflict a spear kills Castor, the mortal twin. The truth of their destinies is now revealed: Castor must die as a mortal whereas Pollux, who has the gift of immortality from his divine father, is eternal. Pollux is no longer free to move in and out of the space of his other half but now is conscious of his loss.

Pollux is now alone. Seeing his brother killed in battle evokes the deep pain of their irrevocable separation. Castor is the side of Pollux that completes his sense of wholeness; with the loss of his brother there is emptiness and a haunting sense of something missing. His grief was intense, so intense he could no longer go on living without him. Because of this despairing grief he petitioned Zeus to allow him to relinquish his immortality to join his brother in death. In a rare bequeath Zeus granted Pollux, his divine son, this wish.^x Their original disparity (divine versus mortal) is equalised through their shared immortality.

While we may tend to typify the Geminian behaviour as scattered, nervous or non-committal, unconsciously what underlies this behaviour is a frantic search for the other they have been separated from. In essence all Gemini placements contain an image of a birth twin they are separate from. What is missing is often unconscious, but nonetheless drives the individuals forward to quest and question for the lost other. In this myth it is the severed connection to the twin/sibling that allows the other to

cross the threshold to the underworld, the psychological territory where we encounter 'shadow'. Castor, the mortal, becomes a *psychopomp* leading his brother across the liminal of death. In Gemini, separation awakens consciousness, and the consciousness of being separate is painful. Gemini in the horoscope may carry the earliest images of separateness and the search for what is missing often projected onto the other "twin" represented as a sibling, friend or partner. Gemini is the first experience of consciousness in the zodiacal wheel, a consciousness of separation and the awareness of the loss of connection.

Gemini is an early experience in the zodiac - it is the first sign in the trinity of air and the first mutable and dual sign. In essence it is the first representation in the zodiac of the experience of separation and opposites. Following the metaphors offered by the zodiac, this experience of separation also exists before the experience of secure attachment symbolised by the sign, Cancer. Viewing the zodiac as a metaphor for psychological development the experience of Gemini occurs at an early stage, before the ability to understand, reflect or analyse has been developed, and exists before the experience of emotional attachment has been internalised. As a symbol of the developmental process, Gemini is too young to consciously hold the impact of a profound loss such as the loss Pollux experienced. The feelings that are constellated with this loss are consciously forgotten, flowing into the Lethe, the Underworld river of forgetting. The potent feelings of grief, awoken by the separation from the other, are interred and denied conscious access, becoming shades of feelings: a sense of emptiness, something feels missing or lost, a feeling of incompleteness. Quite commonly this 'missing' feeling is projected out onto the world, especially the world of equal others, as this is the world compatible with Gemini. This feeling of

connection to the missing half, then, is often idealised as the soul mate (in the sign of Libra) or the bonds of fraternal or sororal love (the sign of Aquarius). Underlying many Geminian placements is often a feeling of profound loss or disconnection without any rational explanation as to why this feeling may exist. Yet these feelings become embodied in the nervous system as anxiety or a lack of concentration. Since the unconscious memory of separation is woken by closeness shared in an adult partnership or intimate friendship, dodging commitment is an effective defence against loss.

The Dioscuri's myth is a haunting story of the closeness of the sibling bond and a poignant reminder of the complexity that underlies Gemini. Vedic twins, the Asvins, also were inseparable but managed to be eternally fused by marrying the same woman. Because the twin is such a powerful and luminous archetypal image it is not surprising that this theme, in different ways, is woven throughout the fabric of many culture's myths.

Twins and the Culture of the Copy

*“At least I knew who I was
when I got up this morning,
but I think I must have changed
several times since then.”*

- Lewis Carroll

Mythic themes of twins exist in most cultures. Twin myths have many themes, however the image of dualism is universally consistent. Opposing elements such as light and dark, heaven and earth, day (Sun) and night (Moon), good and evil are easily paired, hence many mythic twins represent polarised forces.^{xi} Whether the twins are

destined to remain polar opposites or become united is a pattern pervading their stories. Duplicity is often represented in myth as rival twins championing antithetical forces or the union of symmetrical twins, like the Dioscuri and the Asvins.

Levi-Strauss' model from his comparative study of twinship myths suggests "there are striking dissimilarities between the ideologies of twins in the two cultures [European and North American]". European myths emphasise the similarity of twins, which lead to an annihilation of differences (the ideology of identity); North American myths stress the dissimilarities of twins, where each must co-exist with their differences (the ideology of opposition).^{xiii} Another way to observe this split is to compare tribal cultures whose myths concern the killing of one or both twins with literate cultures whose myths tell of the union of twins. While common twin motifs exist in all cultures, the ideological dissimilarity seems to be whether the twin-other is absorbed and integrated, symbolising a holistic/androgynous nature, or is banished and killed off suggesting an eternity of polarity and opposition. Psychologically Gemini's task wavers between the instinctual urge to annihilate and the social urge to assimilate its opposite. Nonetheless Gemini's fate is to encounter its twin.

Twins, as doubles or copies, naturally represent a consciousness of 'other'. Whether twins are trickster figures, psychopomps, cultural heroes, city fathers, warriors, or gods, they activate consciousness, portending conscious development. Birth and civilisation constellate the twin image. Their mythologies, in contemporary terms, symbolise an awareness of 'shadow', a personification of an alter ego or a mirror that reflects what is missing. The twin may be a rival, a 'dark' or un-heroic twin, who must be overcome; or a sibling or partner, who is essentially a counterpart or twin

soul. The emergent consciousness of other and attempt to either co-exist or obliterate the other often requires a sacrifice in order to mature. Themes of conscious awakening and sacrifice are woven throughout twin myths informing us of the powerful fate inherent in Gemini. It seems to me that the sacrifice of Gemini occurs when language and mobility begin to be developed. With this developmental process consciousness and separation awaken. The twin is relinquished.

Bruce Lincoln postulated that in the Proto-Indo-European cosmogonic myth, the world results “from a primordial act of sacrifice in which the first priest, whose name was Manu (‘Man’), sacrificed his twin brother, the first king, whose name was Yemo (‘Twin’).”^{xiii} Out of this template most Western cosmogonies arise. Vedic myth conforms to this prototype. Manu^{xiv} was the first man to offer an oblation to the gods. Manu sacrificed his twin, Yama, who became the overseer of the Underworld, escorting the dead to the realm of their ancestors. “Yama was the sacrificial victim essential to the act of creation over which Manu presided. In other words ‘Man’ sacrificed his ‘Twin’.”^{xv} This primordial creation motif is similar to myths of certain West African tribes where one twin prematurely leaves the cosmic egg and the other twin is sacrificed to ensure a better world.^{xvi} The motif of the sacrificed or assimilated twin recurs throughout Western myth as well.

The motif of a sacrificed twin preceding the founding of a city^{xvii} is a variation on this theme (the founding of a city is a movement towards civilisation and conscious development). The myth of Roman twins, Romulus and Remus, conform to the mythic theme as Romulus kills his brother and gives his name to the eternal city. The eponymous empire is founded on the blood sacrifice of Remus, who is killed by his

twin brother in the process of founding and building the city. Interestingly this archaic motif of the sacrificed twin preceding the birth of civilisation surfaced in a later culture's myth.^{xviii} Greek myth also depicts twins as city founders, however unlike the Roman myth, a twin is not so overtly sacrificed.

Greek twins, Amphion and Zethus, are also city founders, however rather than sacrificing or murdering their twin, they co-operate in raising the city walls of Thebes. Numerous other twin motifs are woven throughout their story: the impure or exiled mother forced to expose her twin babies, twins fostered by a shepherd, the mother's eventual rescue and release by the twins, the twin's divine parentage as well as their notable character dissimilarities.^{xix} All these motifs are also part of the myth of Romulus and Remus. However, unlike the Roman twins, in the myth of Amphion and Zethus the theme of sacrifice as a harbinger of civilisation or consciousness is replaced by the theme of assimilation. Greek myth does not always conform to the Indo-European prototype, however it is twins who herald the rebirth of Thebes, destined to be a great city and dynasty. The twin founding ushers in a more developed era for the Thebans. The Theban twins build the city walls together by utilising their considerably different talents. Amphion is a gifted musician whose lyre playing coerces nature into co-operating with the construction of the city walls; Zethus has enormous strength and is able to manually lift the heavy stones into place. Each twin co-operates, centred on the task and unified by their common goal. The Greek variant on the theme merges, rather than sacrifices, the twin's opposite natures. One aspires to the poetical, musical and cultural side while the other aligns with the strength and determined spirit of the wild. Here the image of the twin heralds a birth, however rather than the sacrifice of a twin, an assimilation of the twins occurs. The

possibilities of dealing with the Geminian polarity swing between annihilation and assimilation.

The vanquished or sacrificed twin theme from antiquity has a contemporary counterpart. Ultrasound technology has revealed that many twin pregnancies result in a single birth and that one of the twins is either absorbed into the body of the other twin or expelled unnoticed by the mother. Latest statistics suggest one in every six conceptions is a twin although only one out of every sixty births is a twin. This phenomenon is commonly known as the ‘vanishing twin’ syndrome.^{xx} The sacrificed twin heralding birth is not only a mythic motif but also a biological reality:

“We are conceived as twins and, most of us, born single. We conceive of ourselves, from the start, as twins, then one disappears. Together, the First Twins struggle with forces primeval, opening a space in this world for us to tame horses, plough the land, survive the lightning; then one devours the other. The vanished twin leaves behind a body as dry and as thin as a fragment of papyrus.”^{xxi}

The missing twin of Gemini is not just a psychological theme, but a biological reality.

Sacrifice is a recurring theme in cosmogony. When the image of twins and sacrifice appear in myth, they herald birth: the founding of cities or empires, the heroic task of individuation or birth itself. Perhaps twins represent a more differentiated symbol for the advent of consciousness since the twin is a perfect representative of duality, equality and the conscious realisation of an other outside of one’s own self: ‘twins incarnate an ideal of ontological perfection’.^{xxii}

NOTES

ⁱ Hugh Lloyd-Jones in *Myths of the Zodiac* (Duckworth, London: 1978) suggests Zethus and Amphion were associated with Gemini as well. p. 44.

ⁱⁱ For a complete examination of the sibling archetype astrologically see Brian Clark, *The Sibling Constellation, The Astrology and Psychology of Sisters and Brothers*, (Penguin, London: 1999).

ⁱⁱⁱ From *The Homeric Hymn to the Dioscuri* translated by Charles Boer, *The Homeric Hymns*, Spring, Dallas, 1970.

^{iv} *The Iliad of Homer*, translated by Richard Lattimore, University of Chicago, Chicago, 1961. Book 3:171.

^v Ibid. Book 3:236-8.

^{vi} Apollonius of Rhodes, *The Voyage of the Argo*, translated by E.V. Rieu, Penguin, London, 1971. In Book 1 the author lists all the heroes on the quest. In lines 146-149 he lists Castor and Polydeuces.

^{vii} Gemini often can symbolise the lost sibling, either literally or imaginatively. In the popular myth of the Dioscuri's twin birth, some of Leda's other children are not mentioned. *The Ehoiai* (Catalogue of Women 6th C BCE), lists two other daughters of Leda - Timandra and Phylonoe. Euripides in *Iphigenia at Aulis* also mentions another daughter, Phoibe. Gemini may represent the severed connections to kin, especially siblings, throughout the familial ancestry.

^{viii} C. Kerényi. *The Heroes of The Greeks*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1959. p.109.

^{ix} According to Pausanias the *Kypria*, a lost epic, suggests these twins may have been daughters of Apollo.

^x For a moving description of this, see Pindar, *The Odes*, translated by C.M. Bowra, Penguin (London: 1969). Nemean Ode X: 75-9.

^{xi} Greek mythic tradition abounds with twinning and this coupling is apparent in later Greek myth. For instance Eros, the power and madness of love, is doubled with Anteros, the avenger of unrequited love; Prometheus, the visionary forward-thinker, is doubled with Epimetheus, after-thought; or Deimos and Phobos are twin images of terror and fear fathered by the war god, Ares. Bruce Lincoln in *Death, War and Sacrifice*, University of Chicago (Chicago: 1991) page 40, argues that Rhadamanthys and Minos may be twins and that Aeschylus poetically referred to Menelaus and Agamemnon as twins. A common theme in myth and literature casts twins in the polar roles of the 'light' and 'dark' twin. For the West African cultural examination of twin myths, see Yves Bonnefoy, *Mythologies*, translated by Gerald Honigsblum et al under the direction of Wendy Doniger. 2 volumes; University of Chicago (Chicago: 1991). Volume 2: 33 ff.

^{xii} Wendy Doniger, *The Implied Spider: Politics and Theology in Myth*. Columbia University Press (New York: 1998). p.151-2

^{xiii} Bruce Lincoln, *Death, War & Sacrifice*, p. 32.

^{xiv} Vedic myth assigns this name to 14 mythological progenitors of mankind. see John Dowson, *A Classical Dictionary of Hindu Mythology and Religion, Geography, History and Literature*, Routledge and Kegan Paul (London: 1972). 199.

^{xv} Jaan Puhvel, *Comparative Mythology*, John Hopkins University Press (Baltimore: 1987). 286.

^{xvi} Bonnefoy, *Mythologies*, Volume 2: 33 ff.

^{xvii} Ignaz Goldziher, *Mythology Among the Hebrews and Its Historical Development*, translated by Russell Martineau. Longmans, Green & Co. (London: 1877), p.113 states 'in the myths of all peoples the Solar heroes are regarded as the founders of city life, and that a fratricide often preceded the building of a city'. The Hebrew story of Cain's murder of his brother, Abel, follows this theme. Later the Romans adopted this motif.

^{xviii} This theme recurring in Roman myth perplexes scholars. See Jaan Puhvel, *Comparative Mythology*, p. 286-8.

^{xix} Other Greek twins Pelias and Neleus conform to these themes. They were exposed on a mountain after birth and when they matured they rescued their mother. They were temperamentally dissimilar and eventually Pelias forced his twin into exile.

^{xx} Statistical research is reported in Jill Neimark, "Nature's Clones", *Psychology Today*, Volume 30, No. 4, July/August 1997 and Lawrence Wright, *Twins and What They Tell Us About Who We Are*. John Wiley and Sons (New York: 1997). Chapter 6.

^{xxi} Hillel Schwartz, *The Culture of the Copy: Striking Likenesses, Unreasonable Facsimiles*. Zone Books (New York: 1996). p.19. Schwartz also quotes statistics and examples of the 'vanishing twin' syndrome.

^{xxii} Bonnefoy, *Mythologies*, Volume 2: 33.