



Twins:

Mirage, Lacuna, and The Sea

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** For maximum retention, the editors suggest reading
"Twins: Mirage, et al" twice: beginning / end, beginning / end.*

There are all kinds of ways out of the body; it's only a matter of finding the proper wormhole to wriggle through. We secretly want out, baffled by the strange physical sensations of continuously balancing between two poles that are never fixed and can never be defined,

from being pulled in two directions, first plunging, then snapping back, exhaustion at the center, so finally, one begins to test the surface of reality, tapping here, knocking there, massaging the bubble with her fingertips to find loose spots, trap doors, trick spots where the membrane will give.

Once we find the soft spot, we pierce the mirage, and discover behind it a lacuna, into which we are carelessly dropped into freefall. Some wormholes deposit us into the blissful midst of hypnosis, trance, euphoria, or a profound sense of stillness and peace, leading to a literal or figurative out-of-body experience. Winterton has called this phenomenon a “transcendental fix,” and notes that it can be induced by any form of overwhelming, transformative pleasure—drugs, sports, art, sex, fast cars, wild horses, ritual, exercise, intellectual study, creative expression, meditation, prayer. When the individual becomes infused and consumed with the messages being delivered by the senses, she may become temporarily unaware of the thread connecting

consciousness to flesh, and experience the sense of existing separate from a mass of cells and tissue. These experiences are often dubbed epiphanies, and great value is placed on them; here stories are created and meaning assigned, and the resulting ideas have direct, and sometimes dramatic, effect on subsequent behavior patterns and life choices.

But it is the more dangerous lacunae that are of primary concern to us here, because they affect people so profoundly, and because they are so little understood. We have names for these dramatic exits from the body; we call them Anxiety, Depression, Rage, Guilt, Shame, and so on, and we perceive them as deviant states, often without the slightest breath of understanding regarding how we ended sitting in a pile of our own excrement, and not only that, but why we feel compelled to spread that shit around and force others to eat it with us.

Before we can proceed with our inquiry into the nature of lacunae, we must first make the careful distinction between Trauma and Abuse. An isolated

episode of trauma in an otherwise peaceful life can be put in perspective if the individual realizes it as being Other (deviant) than the norm. The source of the trauma then becomes its Inconsistency with everything the individual previously knew. The severity and breadth of the trauma help to direct the timetable on which the individual readapts to her new reality in light of the new information gathered from the traumatic experience, but a single incident of trauma can often be overcome, as the conflicting information is reabsorbed and shapeshifts into circumstances acceptable for continuing existence.

In the case of ongoing abuse, such as dysfunctional relationships and war environments, there is no outside perspective, no wider context in which to place the recurring horrific experiences, and the body must develop carefully trained physiological responses to endure and combat the experience of invasion and suffering. Blocks are deposited into the psychic bloodstream like calcium chunks or quartz crystals,

forcing energy to bend around them, or diffuse while trying to pass through them. These patterns, which become hard-wired into the brain, cut deep grooves that become increasingly rigid during times of addiction and obsession, and they replay themselves relentlessly through the body, which has itself become hooked on spikes, crests, and falls of adrenaline. Like quicksand, the deeper in you go, the faster you sink. Eventually the being seems to either succumb or gain the awareness that it will be up to his Conscious Will to retrain his mind out of these patterns.

Lately I am stuck in a terrible rut of fit followed by guilt. Daniel, my twin, and I had a bitter argument tonight, but thankfully I was able to retreat before the situation inflated to unreasonable proportions. He wanted me to apologize, but I wasn't sure for what, and I wasn't about to offer vague sentiments to pacify him if I couldn't vouch for my sincerity out of lack of clarity. He was angry. I remained detached, which seemed to make him

more furious, until he started to fall asleep, at which point I wept furious tears that he dared verbally assault me and then disappear. He sank his teeth into my shoulder for a moment, then turned his back. Darling, don't. Don't turn into the monster. My chest heaved as if to collapse and the shrill ringing in my temples quickly amplified to hit a high pitch of crescendo.

When the mirage of a stable landscape dissolves and an internal lacuna opens up, there is the overpowering sensation of the downward pull of the earth on the extremities, a weight on the psychic mass, the sense of being swallowed. Boundaries created by normally functioning sensory perceptions dissolve. This becomes the time period in which it is crucial to remain aware of the shifts in bodily experience, to stay afloat, and to look for a way out, a branch to grab onto, something to take your attention off of or away from the perplexing Object-Obsession.

A lacuna can be likened to a black hole, the opening of a cave, an air bubble, an ocean swell; walking high on

sand dunes under cloudy sky, a large, deep body of water, a knot in a tree trunk, a tricky current that opens up into a funnel-shaped whirlpool, the deep of the forest at night. One may also think of it as a gap through which the individual plummets, such as Lewis Carroll's Rabbit Hole. Unless suicide is utilized as an escape route, the body physically wears itself out before the bottom is found. So no one knows if there is a bottom at all. Still, some claim they have found bottom, and God wasn't there.

Daniel is my constant companion. He weaves dandelions into my hair and indulges my foibles. He thinks I am smart, but I am certain he is my intellectual superior. Still, I trump him with my intuitive gifts, my ability to visualize the future as it will occur, to read the motives and quips of his evil little brain. Twins, split at birth, connected by cellular memory. Two raw embryos, liquid and bloodied, pressed up against each other, heartbeats pulsing and lungs swelling, then sinking, in unison. I like to think of it when he's far from me—how, suspended in

the sea, our tiny digits formed at a compromising pace. Our sex organs developed in the third week—did we masturbate each other in the womb? It seems likely, though we have never discussed it.

Daniel wins through detachment. When he turns his back to me, or closes his eyes, or hangs up the phone, the lacuna opens up, and suddenly I exceed my surroundings. It mystifies me—how the landscape appears completely intact, but in a heartbeat, something wavers, blurs, then shifts on a downward slope of distorted perspective. I may feel dizzy, gasp with fright, or twitch with rage. He may pull the blanket over his head, or turn the phone off, or find any other number of ways to shut me out. Daniel! We share a body, how can you ignore me? He doesn't move, doesn't respond. I can't breathe, as though Daniel controls my lungs with his intent, which he has focused elsewhere. I know I am not All, and reel in this recognition. Anywhere I go—mostly, into the bathroom to lay down on the cold black and white tiled floor—he isn't there. I try to imagine a

mother bear holding me in a snuggli pack to feel secure, but it's Daniel's flat chest that I need. To work on self-sufficiency, I might envision a larger version of myself cradling a smaller version of myself. It doesn't serve to calm me down; instead I hang onto the roots of my hair and sob from the hollows of my belly and lungs, and let the shudders pass through my muscular ligature. A disc has slipped in my brain, the walls are down, order has dissolved. I am nothing but a feeding tube with a mouth on one end and a rectum on the other, offering nothing to the world but waste. Sometimes people feed me, and when they don't, I quiver in the terror of death. Daniel says I am Godless. As far to the bottom as I go? I don't know. But my God doesn't follow me down—my God hovers like a mist over a mountain range or a sunburst through a cloud cover. When I go, I go alone, and when I finally deplete myself in the fit of yearning, the only reason I pick myself up off the floor is simply because it has become absurd to remain there any longer. The solid properties of the cold black and white tile, or hard

slat-wood floor, no longer provide me with comfort. To follow the natural trajectory of the fit, the only thing left to do would be to slice open my skin, and I know what a mess that would make. I also know it wouldn't make me feel better—that nothing can in Daniel's absence. By this point, I have accepted this absence, and move forward into a period of numbness that will linger on for a few hours or days—I soften, but still cannot lighten. At this point, Daniel resumes quiet communication with me, but I say little. We move with perceptible caution and compassion for each other.

The only way out is in. If you cannot find it in you to face up to, navigate, and eventually manipulate the forces affecting the moment of your being, you must make more space within the container of your flesh, but to do so, something must be severed; there's a visceral tearing to be heard in the moment of alienation, when the self splits off from the consciousness in the face of that which it cannot process or accept.

To say so is no radical proposition, but merely to repose the question asked so eloquently by Mr. Hughes: What does happen to a dream deferred? What are the physiological repercussions of oppression induced from any source, exterior or interior? First, oppression must be distinguished from repression; the latter to hold back by an act of will or volition, and the former to keep down by "severe and unjust use of force or authority." By these definitions, one represses one's self, and is oppressed by another. In the language of Freudian psychology, we may say "Daniel is sexually repressed," and may look to overbearing mothers, American puritanical roots, or guilt induced by religious indoctrination to explain what instinct deems an unnatural phenomenon. If the church, the patriarch, the white man, or any aggressive individual with whom one is in intimate relations may be seen as oppressors, why is Daniel labeled repressed? Did he hold back of his own free will? Did he ask to be forced onto his knees each week in chapel, to confess to erotic thought as a sin, to be chastised and ridiculed

after our mother rifled through his belongings and found his pornographic magazines? Did I, likewise, invite admonishments to cover up my figure with a beach towel at Christian Camp, to have makeup scrubbed off my face after a trip to the mall with friends, to be told to cross my legs under my desk in class?

Furthermore, there is no mention of injustice in the definition or usage of repression, as though we imagine that repression happens as a natural counter-current to a certain set of events which may be deemed unjust in the *act* (oppression) but no longer unjust in the *result* (repression). Repression, to Freud, involved the individual act of excluding information, such as taboo desires or unacceptable memories, from the consciousness. But here there is no assumption of a conscious choice to exclude the information, no mention of volition of will, although an act of will, or several sustained acts of will, can retrieve the misfiled information and return the being to a state closer to Consistency. That the individual bears ultimate

responsibility over her own unconscious must be assumed, or else we would say Daniel was oppressed rather than repressed. Rather, Daniel must reach a point in his development in which he must undo what was done in order to deliver himself from a state of Oppression into a state of Awareness, after which, strangely enough, he learns to repair his life, relationships, and spirit through Conscious Repression.

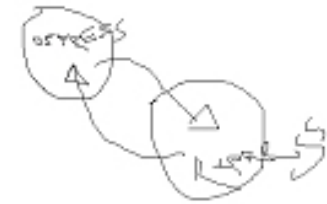
This is to say that the individual is more than fully equipped to oppress himself. Another definition of the verb form (to oppress) is “to overwhelm or crush.” Why sugarcoat it? Someone taught Daniel how to divy up and exile parts of his psyche, or at least, he adapted in the face of certain circumstances and influences. Lets say Daniel had an alcoholic father who forced Daniel to his knees and burned his ears with a lighter after one too many tallboys. Now, Daniel becomes uncomfortable in the presence of tallboys, even in an otherwise safe social situation with friends. His breath quickens, his heart slightly accelerates, his ears start to twitch and burn.

Daniel is repressed; he cannot enjoy a drink with friends because of an association with a previous oppressor who is no longer present, but his body, susceptible and adaptive to programmed code, has learned all it needs to know to keep sending out false signals.

So Daniel was oppressed and is now repressed. Who cares? Is this a matter of semantics? We must call him repressed, because in the lack of a physical oppressor, he must take responsibility and assume the willful choice of his actions, be they conscious or unconscious. To choose to call him oppressed is to do away with the idea of an act of will, which is perilous to our concept of individual identity. Or is it? We assume that unconscious actions are still willed, in a sense, because Daniel has choices as to how he acts. But does he? *Or has his body itself turned against him?*

Yes, Daniel's own body has become his oppressor, having assumed the physiological responses necessary to keep Daniel cut up in little pieces that are unaware of each other.

It's like this:



then



this:



Where is this analysis going? Toward an emphasis on the loosening of the conviction of individual Will, certainly, but actually, it's more like turning against the notion of a single will – to suggest that a psyche that has undergone the force of oppression can no longer be considered an individual at all, but has become a physical multiplicity of beings engaged in battle with each other. The oppressor has become internalized at the cellular level and acts in accordance to another,

second Will, often inconsistent with the “truer” desires of the spiritual essence. A single body, comprised as it is of cellular bonds, its consciousness of sense, impulse and memory, and its identity dependent on skillful integration and gradient of relationship, need no longer be perceived as a single entity with a unified Will. We can refer here to Mr. Whitman, who understood himself quite well, and expressed it so beautifully when he wrote the oft-quoted words, “I am large, I contain multitudes.”

The Surrealists got it right when they chose to focus in on dreams as the most common, routine and popular exit from the body. Why not consider the dream life in proper proportion to the waking life, Breton asked? After all, we spend 8 hours a day, a third or more, asleep and engaged in an alternate realm of perception, free of intoxicating substances, yet we often disregard those visions in the morning light. In my dreams, Daniel and I are Siamese twins who live as sea creatures in the ocean. We share lungs and intestines and move limply

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through the depths of the murk like two jellyfish stuck on each other. By day, our eyes are never far averted from the other's, and at night we lie on our sides on the sandy floor, and nestle our chins into each other's shoulders and necks when it's time to settle down to sleep. Our genitals rest up against other; Daniel's flaccid penis and heavy testicles quietly throb alongside my warm, hairy vulva. I would prefer it this way.

