

OF COSMIC TWINS

Ralph Paine

Difference ... only blooms to its full conceptual power when it becomes as slight as can be: like the difference between twins.

Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *Cannibal Metaphysics*¹

In this fleeting world where no dewdrop can linger in the autumn wind, why imagine us to be unlike the bending grasses?

Murasaki Shikibu, *The Tale of Genji*²

Why the back-loop? Why return to school – any school whatever? Robert Smithson once remarked that “no matter how far out you go, you are always thrown back on your point of origin.”³ Yet he forgot to add: being-thrown-back always alters the origin. I'm figuring that this is what Frank and Yves had in mind with *The Cosmic Twins*, to alter the point of origin. Yet nothing grand or sweeping was going to be required, just an uncomplicated return gesture; a minimal shift of emphasis away from pedagogy toward initiation. When everything becomes a rite, a ritual, a performance, we learn in a different way. When a lesson becomes an almost whimsical fabulation or a workshop turns strangely therapeutic, we find ourselves in an ever-so-slightly altered realm of apprenticeship; a place that's not so reliant on established norms, codes, rules, measures, protocols; a place where learning becomes intuitive and procedural, one's gestures a little more like sorcery.

I couldn't make it to Dunedin during Yves and Frank's residency, so when they asked me to write something for this issue of *Scope* I decided to remain a little distant on it, re-jigging their title *The Cosmic Twins* into Cosmic Twins and reshaping it as the name of something way more theoretical and diagrammatic: a conceptual flourish, patterning, position, arrangement. In what follows, then, Cosmic Twins is not the occasion of the residency, and nor are Frank and Yves identified as *the* Cosmic Twins.

As if taken from a list of *qi* (positions) in an ancient Chinese sex manual, the name Cosmic Twins evokes a certain configuration of latent intensities. The name itself is efficacious, as if coiled within it reside all those magic flows and powers of which one can barely speak: lifelines of the Formless, of almost imperceptible reality; virtual paths of Air, Sensation, Awareness; flux of intangible potentiality ... To enact Cosmic Twins will in this sense be to uncoil a variation of these flows, but vitally, always as potentials. Always, that is to say, as a channelling of the position's latent intensities without dissipation or dissolution, thus allowing them to travel and circulate *continuously*. At any rate, such is the *cosmic* dimension of Cosmic Twins: the continuous, the One All.

As the one of all its virtual paths, Cosmic Twins is affirmative, a generic positivity. How then, and without introducing the negative, to allow for its provision as two, the Twins? Already we noted a coiled–uncoiled modulation at play. When enacted, a version of the position's multiple intensities unfurl and re-furl, unfold and refold, untwist and re-twist. The intensities, in other words, become manifest energies, qualities, yet always to furl, fold and twist back into the position and thus in some new way preserve its intensities. This in itself is a twinned operation, a doubled and doubling movement (of disequilibrium and asymmetry) whereby zones, voids and rhythms begin to form and transform, constantly rearranging their innate complicity with the One All.

Thus, Air becomes breathing in–breathing out. Sound resounds, echoing across the voids. Shadow and colour now accompany light along curves of the folding-unfolding. Waves of the body electric pass through entwined tissue, cresting and falling, simultaneously pulsed and superposed. Around dripping folds and hollows, scents waft and wane. Touch touches upon, continuous-contiguous, surface to surface, sliding, undulating, quivering, hold and release, thrust and withdrawal. Taste blooms. Awareness becomes aware of itself, as other; *ātman–aham*, the possibility of two selves, two faces, looking-eyes/looked-at-eyes, interfaces, condition of I-othering, of possible inside–outsides, a potential-actual entanglement, diffusion, and decentering of the I, the twin, the twin's twin, the twin's twin's twin ... And the names are legion: spirit-mask, persona, @, genius, demon, id, profile, tag, jinn, agent, number; simulacrum, password, replicant, selfie, bot, mediator; spectre, geist, signature, image, avatar ... Sometimes the I-othering uncoils-recoils via the machinic being of devices. Sometimes Cosmic Twins itself appears as if a device: *My World is the Model and I am Cypher – Scatter the Code!*

To study Cosmic Twins is to study the I; and to study the I is to diffuse the I; and to diffuse the I is to be inspired/infected by others: the co-arising of I and collective ... An emptying out–filling up of both I and collective as correlational performativity – and at the same time, as correlational counter-performativity (resistance, suspension) internal to the co-arising. Considered now in temporal mode, whereas the potentially infinite cosmic dimension subsists as *pure duration*, the provision of the Twins interleaves a multiply doubled or collective awareness of *individuated times* – loops of time, knots of time, pockets of time – a differentiated/differentiating awareness, that is to say, whereby pure duration is in some new manner both performed and counter-performed and thus felt or registered-in-passing as finite existence: proliferating localised durations, encounters, zone-bound pulses, tempos, rhythms, clusters of speed and slowness, vibe, *suchness*. Relayed throughout and at all levels of the enactment, awareness now touches itself along fractal interfaces of time, becoming-other via affectively bonded yet open past-futures of the One All.

Because reducible to neither its twinned operation nor its cosmic dimension, enacting Cosmic Twins expresses *the virtuosity of between*. We say 'virtuosity' because this between keeps things moving, resonating, in-touch, infectious. Everything remains trans-active and in play between a cosmic dimension and the provision of the Twins ... Between differing and shifting zones, rhythms, and localised relations ... Between breathing in–breathing out, folding–unfolding, potential–actual, inside–outside, etc., and so nothing gets entirely jammed and isolated on either side or in any region of the play. Example: the dual term (binomial) pleasure-pain. Etymologically, 'passion' and 'suffering' are correlated, not opposed. Hence, to enact Cosmic Twins is to suffer its constant I-othering as a form-of-passion, a suffering and a passion both whereby pain opens up to pleasure and pleasure to pain, as if everything's moving to and fro between dissimilar poles of attraction. Yet even while remaining a singular possibility, it's not that masochism is inescapable here. Rather, it's that enacting the position entails inexorable and almost complete exposure to a sensuous, lived experience and thus to the possibilities of fatigue and renewal, rupture and healing, sadness and joy – in other words, that the event (and the sense) always arises in the middle of these – and myriad other – dual terms. In which case, fatigue, rupture and sadness should not be regarded as the respective negations of renewal, healing and joy. When before we said that Cosmic Twins is "affirmative, a generic positivity," what we meant is that *amor fati* traverses all zones and speeds of the position. *Myriad throws cannot entice / The answer from a tumbling dice / A love of fate enflames the world / My streaming cunt, your cock unfurled*. Enacting Cosmic Twins is thus to be equal to what is happening, to accept, a being-consigned – or sometimes, more like a *being-carried* into the celestial lightness of the position's mobility.

Cosmic Twins is not a project, a program, a platform, a methodology ... Rather, it's a position, *qi*, conceptual flourish, configuration for the Common. Possessing all the magical powers of use value but none of the geocidal qualities of capitalist exchange value and production, it nevertheless remains to some extent vulnerable, open, mutable, and thus may be forced in a self-destructive manner to adhere to the bio-political, economic, legal, psychological, aesthetic, etc. powers and alliances operational within its zone(s) of enactment ... On the other hand, it may be enhanced and empowered in new ways. We say "to some extent" because despite its openness and mutability, that is to say, its ability to I-other via enactment and thus be affected, the position retains its latent cosmic dimension, holds on to its withdrawn and resistant kernel or the transcendental (contra transcendent) idea of itself as *this*

position/potentiality rather than any other position/potentiality. Thus, any person, pairing, group, milieu, organisation, institution, biosocial multiplicity whatever may adopt the position, but they cannot, without apocalyptic-type malice and violence, annihilate either its desire to *be* or its desire to be what it is *in-itself*.

We call those entities enacting the position *users*. Each user has a *username*. Our usernames include but are not limited to: Frank Fu, Yves Gore, Fu–Gore, Ralph Paine, Tiepolis, Zen Master Fu, Frank Fu Art, Cinema Irritating, Background Boy, F.U. Institute, and Yum Cha Club.

Cosmic Twins has no *instrumental* aims; it obliges no work, no productivity as such. Yet our use of the position – our *procedural* use – entails making artworks. Our desire, in other words, lies in the conducting of ritual, performance and intervention, in delivering talks and workshops, in conjuring social media content, producing films, making paintings, drawings, sculpture ... These, however, are not completed manifestations of Cosmic Twins. Nothing of its innate potentiality is used up in the works, nothing terminated. On the contrary, we consider them evocations or traces of the position's use, and thus of new uses which the future makes possible.

With the film *Orange Confucius* (2015) we set out to tell a myth of Cosmic Twins. We were interested in using the position to relay a theory-karma of the position. Given that cinema encompasses a whole automated anti-history of time and movement, we thought making a film a good way to go. And just as any telling of a myth is not a copy of an original telling but always a variation (there are *only* variations), the making of *Orange Confucius* would entail a cinematic putting-into-variation of the position. *Director's Note: ALWAYS RELAY THE CONTINUOUS BY WAY OF MUTATION, THE ADOPTIVE BY WAY OF ADAPTION*. Part documentary, part imaginary tale, the film tracks a real journey and a real love affair; yet it does this via a becoming-myth in which the documentary sequences and the imaginary sequences interact and mutate to the point of being more or less undistinguishable. In this regard, however, *Orange Confucius* does not unify its two procedures, but rather constructs compounds of two dissimilar types of sensation, uncoiling-coiling between twinned cinematic techniques – the Fanciful superposed on the Documentary Real. Aided and inspired by myriad indigenous ontologies, for us the logic-karma of a myth is always a becoming-One All of a Two, and vice versa.

Making *Orange Confucius* sometimes felt like a crazy-quilt adventure into the inland empire of free indirect discourse. The *modus operandi*: limit scripted dialogue, let the characters speak, let them express themselves, improvise. But also, let as many languages, types of enunciation, accents and dialects as possible be expressed: standard languages and minor ones, twittering and squawking bird languages, elephant calls, rat snufflings, refrains of street-food merchants, spectral voices, voices folded within voices, a sudden announcement in Russian, Fijian singing, Mandarin philosophising, expressions of New Age mysticism; even one of the cameras becomes a character, speaking in whirrs and clicks. So rather than purely indirect discourse, there was an entire free indirect *style of cinema* at play, a style à la Pasolini whereby we mixed vulgarity with the scared, pornography with the

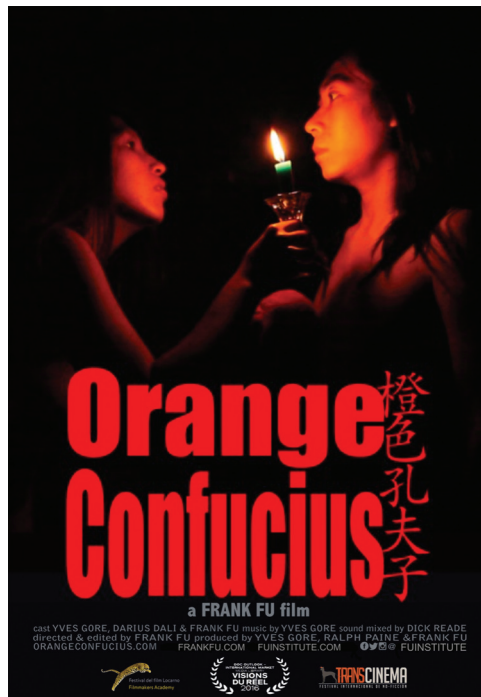


Figure 1. A poster of the film, *Orange Confucius*, directed by Frank Fu, with cast: Yves Gore and Frank Fu, produced by Ralph Paine.

gynaecological, tourism with shamanism, grace with absolute and complete revulsion. And all this falling together of high and low, as it were, enhanced to the max by the use of different quality cameras and microphones, hand-held shots and extremely controlled set-ups, old-school special effects and state-of-the art ones. A machinic and self-reflexive awareness tracked its way into the wild interior of every technical-magical fold. The film touched itself.

Seed, weapon, massage ball / Some kind of fucking artwork! At times the lovers seem to travel as if magic twins, yet for the Woman their earthbound wandering brings on recurring melancholia, a muddle of distraction, perceived ill health, indifference and exhaustion. Inasmuch as the word 'treatment' signifies both cure and rendering, we wanted to *treat* the Woman's melancholia, to heal it by rendering it visible-sonorous. Reminiscent of Albrecht Dürer's famously weirded-out engraving *Melencolia I*, where a brooding and palpably down angel sits and waits in a world overflowing with obscure, chaotic and confused symbolism, *Orange Confucius* sees the Woman moving without guidance, no direction home, seemingly aimless through landscapes, interiors and urban spaces all overabundant in every form of obscure guidance imaginable, from esoteric object-signs (the Confucius head, the orange, dragonflies, the wolf-skin pants, etc.) to a reunion in the desert with her shaman-double; from cryptic wisdom offered by companions and strangers alike to the surreal non-sense of dreams; from a puzzling and voyeuristic fascination for her Mexican house cleaner (which she shares with a group of axolotls) to a book on relationships glimpsed lying on a sofa. She endures an intense medical check-up. She seeks various cures – cupping, acupuncture, massage. She gets angry. She masturbates while drinking alone in an LA bar. She *suffers* the camera.

In the conceptual world I've sketched briefly here, making art is a figuring-forth of Cosmic Twins. So it's always the configuration of a configuration, a fresh use, rebirthing – over and over. The process is extreme close-up and intimate, but it's an intimacy of the outside, an immanent outside, possibility of the other; potent vision of another world. By travelling this intimacy we release ourselves to the transformative, shape-shifting powers of everything encountered along the way ... *On solitary paths of abandonment / The ties that bind.*

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- 1 Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, *Cannibal Metaphysics: For a Post-Structural Anthropology*, trans. Peter Skafish (Minneapolis: Univocal, 2014), 59.
- 2 Murasaki Shikibu, *The Tale of Genji*, trans. Royall Tyler (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 759.
- 3 Robert Smithson, *The Writings of Robert Smithson*, ed. Jack Flam (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 192.