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In Praise of the Asshole

My asshole expands. I'm trying to remember the moment I became aware of the pleasure from its expansion. The asshole is still largely a taboo: it is, after all, where shit escapes. The first scene in the first gay porn I ever saw showed an actor wearing a black riding helmet sit on an orange traffic cone. It was mesmerizing as slowly inch by inch the orange disappeared inside of him. Questions raced in my heady head. Did it hurt? How is that possible? Did it, in the first place, give him pleasure? It was a great big leap for my sexual imagination that was merely bound up in words. The fake tabloid epistolaries of Xerex Xaviera can only hint at the act of insertion, always in strict missionary capacity, the hard and erect penis penetrating the soft and, as it seemed, terribly uncomplicated vagina. While those that grazed on that *other* kind of penetration seemed to only replicate this duality: as a euphemistic proxy for the vagina, the asshole is nothing but a nondescript hole with no other role than a cock's sock puppet to use. To be the butt of the joke, *ang mahuli may tae sa pwet*. We're talking out of our ass when we're not making sense, and we try our very best not to pass gas. Somebody mentions Uranus and still, I laugh.

It hurt the first time I got fucked. Back then I held onto this notion that sex was primarily initiated by the top because he was probably the more experienced one as he did the active duty of fucking. Though eventually I had to forgive myself for this naïve assumption deeply rooted in Filipino *macho* conditioning that informs our young queer Eros that since *macho* boys have penis, they *must be* the source of *all* sexual knowledge. And since *macho* boys are supposed to be introduced to sex earlier than girls and feminine boys, they must therefore become our teachers.

There was really no impetus to be penetrated as I recall, not even self-doubt if I was ready, and the notion of "only doing it with the right one" had all but been disrupted. Like when I first had a cock in my mouth and it was intoxicating, how deliberate yet unceremonious it was anyhow. I suppose I did picture something else. But I also felt something was fleeting, as if I had to be



able to tell this story from an angle, a certain light, a distinct sound, how I spat and spat in the office sink after this older man shot his load in my mouth. I didn't think it was dirty. I thought it was what faggots did, how they discovered sex, like mimicking a headlight's shimmying window slant on the ceiling.

The first time I actually enjoyed fucking was with Jun. He was 20 years older than I was when we met. We had unbelievably hot phone sex and he'd make convincing slurping sounds, a promise that he would eat my ass — as another guy ate me at the back of his beauty salon somewhere in Cavite, and I thought: so this is how it feels, having something that you were told don't belong together but in fact fit like the slide of a furniture in a corner. The city began to spread itself for me. My body *became the map*, but it didn't hold any definite direction, no point of reference or stable desires, instead the cartographic distribution was uneven, a tentative blueprint of a blueprint that only slivered hints. *We can make things up along the way.*

If I am to connect this to a particular body, it will only scatter and disappoint. So I leave a version of my back on flea-infested carpets like the one Jun laid me on as he finally located for me my prostate; John's smile like the MRT's imminent decay, or his purple curved cock, set nicely on the lounge chair in that lost spacious loft in Guadalupe. Here I read something about the reality of gay sex, that it is not shiny and slick like made up smut. There is blood and shit and sheets to wash; but there is also tenderness.

The guy who fed me rose petals once ditched me so I ended up watching *Happy Together* alone. Fifi for some reason appeared and sat next to me; he was a giddy Physics major who spoke with a slight hairlip, one of the *kolehiyala* gays who hung out at Crayola House in Palma Hall. I cried during the waterfall scene in the movie, and wondered why Fifi didn't when I turned to him for some recognition of pain, like the kind you were taught to postpone and endure, his blank face tattering white as the echo of the waterfall in the lamp obliterated the cascade of the grand thundering Iguazu in the lover's memory.

But then I despise Wong Kar-wai's films now. I figured, we can't ever be that elegant when we are in our throes of passion, when we yearn.



I'm trying to determine here the logic of arousal: when is it about our firsts, and when is it as it is, revealing itself nameless as it unfolds? Do we run after it, or does it chase us in our most vulnerable, and therefore calamitous present? Do we delay so we can strike upon it our loneliness, or do we act upon it in direct orgasmic terms? I stay in the fever pitch and conclude nothing. To name is to demand. Attributes become positions, or when we settle we probably would never have to give up anything anymore, and I relinquish all my responsibilities to you.

Every time I go to bed with a new person, new body, new face, I feel as if I'm unlocking one of those Japanese wooden boxes that require patience to move the panels in their correct figurations. Something inside of me unlocks when I find the rhythm, your rhythm that pulsates to find mine, or when I've finally allowed my anal walls to ease and collapse, and it can only resemble a non-terminating polyphony. It is not an exaggeration when I tell you that when I let you in, my gut flora welcomes you. But all these conjectures take time, all these pastoral meanderings; the outer limits of storage capacity.

I put on Grindr: *enjoys bottom on bottom action*. This prompted questions from curious tops like how does that work? Was that a question of structural lack, I wondered, the way structure is always perceived as an erection or thrust? Or like the absence of metal cranes may readily imply the absence of progress. *Everyone's looking for a signal in the forest*. As I continue to explore and chart the underground passages of my queer Eros, I'm beginning to understand more that nothing is set, and instead of matching my rhythm to the easy random, location-based setups, instead of repeating set patterns based on conditional desires that's prescribed for me (positions, attributes, preferences, certainties), I've come to nurture proximity with my own set of fuck buddies. Erotic recombinations become boundless, play becomes anarchic, not through prescriptive conditional models of desiring, but through repetition of intimacies that's never twice the same. Here I find queer play to be less about functional urgency, but satisfyingly moreso about pleasure that finally resists valuation from brutal market economy, that is, all that is solid melts into air, to borrow Marx' loftier phrase.

My asshole expands. Popular saying goes that it begins when you let in a cock. Mine begins even before that: it is in knowing what it wants. Prior to this revelation, I only saw sex as functional to my queer desires, so I thought it was imperative to assume a position. Then I discovered sex is not how movies cut it



up for us, either in mock rapid fire spontaneity or exaggerated sluggishness. No. It glides like a reverberating hum, a pulsating orifice, constricting at a touch then letting up when it feels it can finally answer back. The asshole anticipates and forms theories, it is both coy and loud.

Once caught in traffic I saw a hole in the wall of a flyover, a small inconspicuous opening that for a second frightened me because it felt like it only appeared at the exact moment I turned. Maybe I finally understood what Tony Perez meant in one of his weird tales. The development officials carved a passageway under a hill in the middle of a city to make way for an underpass, but then angered the *encantos* that lived there. In the story though something was reversed: once the hole revealed itself, instead of reflecting hell, the supposed antithesis of a city that prided itself in utopian technological enterprise, the *encantos* whose position in the cosmological order is both polluted and damned returned the reflection back to the inhabitants of the city, and bared it to them that they were in fact the polluted and the damned. They have created their own special kind of hell: busted pipes and filthy sewers, garbage strewn everywhere, dogs fighting over a scrappy bone, flood and fire.

But how does it work when two bottoms play? I tell the inquiring top, there's finesse. We finger and eat each other's holes. Rimming is divine. It was believed that witches, in order to commune with the Devil, had to kiss a black goat's asshole. The goat in the original roster of sin is the icon of lust, and so the asshole can be read as a corruptive force. In 19th c. friar texts, Manila as a locus of intersecting commerce and knowledge was portrayed as *pusalian*, a literal cesspool, and so the friars warned anyone who thought of sending their children to study in Manila that they will be corrupted by *vicío* (sin and vice). A poem in my queer youth read: "*Being top has a price,/ And it hurts, because nobody,/ Nobody wants to be bottom.*" It appears Ronald Baytan's poem can only conceive two roles homosexual men must assume, a duplication of sanctioned heterosexuality, inserter or insertee. The bottom has no other function but to give in, all their agency lost to the cock, typifying weakness. What a baffling heteronormative prescription!

I know what my hole wants. It wants to be slobbered, kissed, it wants to be teased, it wants to be fingered, massaged, kissed again, it wants to be loosened up. My hole is the one that signals when it's in full bloom. It does not care if you cum or not, all its anal walls want is to gape. It doesn't just want to accommodate you, it wants you to feel its smooth velvety warmth already there, no coaxing, no waiting to be hard. My hole is ever present, not an absence that only appears when something is inserted. And when it gapes in contentment,



it's not because you made it so. It's gaping because it's *my* anus, and it's under *my* control.

In *The Naked Civil Servant*, Quentin Crisp explains why cleaning up dirt in their apartment is pointless; after cleaning, they say, new dirt will only accumulate, and so they just let the dirt pile up until it settles and resembles the furniture.

Dirt without is somewhat always easier to comprehend: it is dust, detritus, pollution, things that are left and surfeit. I'm often asked how I clean my asshole, and I always say, it's trial and error. A douching bulb, Fleet enema, a one-time use only plastic syringe, your trusty bidet, and well, courage. Most guys surprisingly don't mind when a bit of shit appears when we fuck, and some of them find that it's part of the charm. *To avoid accidents*, like a child or an elderly who can't hold it.

Shitting is dirt, it's pollution, it is better if it's out of sight, that nobody talks about it: manners, *kaunting delicadeza naman*. I always laugh when I remember Nancy Botwin in the TV series *Weeds* when she mentioned something about not shitting where you eat, then rearranging the thought, or eating where you shit if you're into that sort of thing – by that she meant she doesn't do her dirty deed as widowed drug peddler queen out in the open. Shitting like crime has to be hush-hush. Even in anal sex, or anything related to the anus, the practical line of decorum is quite thin. An accident is acceptable because it's part of our anatomy, but if somebody asks me about my limits in sexual play, I tell them, I'm not into scat/shit play (coprophagia), i.e. I don't fetishize the thing itself, *das Ding*. Anus (apparatus) and shit (thing) are two separate entities that get confused quite often.

Paul Morris, an American pornographer specializing in bareback videos, also mentioned something about *das Ding*. During the AIDS plague through the 90s, pornography buffed, shaved, and made their porn actors glisten to gloss over the images of gay bodies decimated by opportunistic infections, the more popularized homosexual imagery during that time. It also meant having the actors put on a condom, thereby erasing the semen even in fantasy, the very logos from which queer imagination retains its dangerous and resistive potency. The semen as pollution, particularly semen produced after homosexual acts, proposed lethal the dirt within; the good gays wear condom



and don't get sick, the bad gays bareback and get what they deserve. In British Victorian era, however, semen was prized for its given moral lexicon, and masturbation was strictly forbidden and stigmatized: *spilling the seed* meant to waste one's energy on useless frivolity because the moral worth of semen then was strictly to impregnate, that man like machine must have the capacity to perpetually reproduce. Useless enterprise during the expansion of capitalism in the Industrial age was viewed as a sin because it devalued what was precious in what will eventually become a destructive venture in mass production: time and productivity.

My asshole winks. It is generous.

It needs to be said that, as in queerfemme shaming, there really is such a thing as bottom shaming. I initially thought this was due to the virality tech apps tend to induce such as amplifying toxic masculinity, but it's the everyday queer experience on the ground that still makes this more palpable and evident.

A man or woman may exact toxic masculinity when the value they put on gender and gender expression is filtered through the seemingly foregone conclusion that masculine traits, the *macho*, are most superior. Through toxic masculinity a *parlorista*/beautician, for example, often referred to as *baklang kanal* (dirty faggot, gutter fag, poor faggot) is almost always viewed as scum or low-life. They are shamed because of their gender and class, and are punished for their gender expression. "*Nobody wants to be bottom*", the poem laments. Shaming is a corollary of policing, and a form of punishment. Anything outside the rigid perception of the *macho* is corrupt and perverse, the *macho* creates meaning for the other, and the other must accept this, or else they will be shamed and punished.

I had my phone checked up once and in the store were two *macho* men talking boisterously. I wore ultra-short shorts and netted stockings with garter lace trimmings. *Pare, chicks*, one of them said loudly, and then they laughed. Cat-calling isn't new to me – and despite that as a queerfemme I find that being cat-called by *macho* men disturbs our gendered social roles because of its minute eroticism – this interruption also reminds me of my position within their *macho* hierarchy: I am their negation, and they view me solely as a slut.



Slut is a word used to shame bottoms, but this is slightly more nuanced than when a woman is called one. Women incur sluthood by the number of men they fuck; gay and queer bottoms on the other hand don't need to incur this, it is believed to be their *raison d'être* with no agency whatsoever. Therefore, a bottom's position in *macho* hierarchy is based on their use-value, not even as objects but only as abstract non-entities.

You know what? I'm a bottom pig slut and fuck you.

I'm watching a fisting instructional video by Axel Aabyse. I'm turned on, it's not for the faint of heart. He guides his pup wearing a leather dog mask to slowly open up for his fist. Texts flash on the screen: *Do it with someone you trust*. More and more, as I embark in new-fangled erotic plays which I myself gather and seek, I understand what this means. You are entrusting not just your physical pleasure but your entire well-being to another. Aabyse intensifies the play until his pup's asshole gives in, and he could go on and punch his fist in and out, the sheet slick with thick clear lubricant, dribbling with pink specs. *Don't worry if the liquid turns pink*. This assurance is more for the Master than for the pup. It's about care and mindfulness, a proclamation which I think doesn't only apply to extreme consensual sexual acts but must be said across the spectrum of sexual play: the pink of the body is nothing to be afraid of.

The body is material, it produces fluids, odors, produces endless wonderful recombinations of sensation. It is a garden of earthly delights. So allow me to hijack Aquinas' empirical approach to proving the existence of God. He inferred that since all earthly material things elicit a form of response from the human senses, and since all these earthly materials are created by God, God therefore resides in the realm of our immediate senses. When we enjoy the sight of flowers in bloom, enjoy a delicious meal, or find solace in the presence of a friend, there is God. He bends over, chest down, ass cheeks apart. A puckered rosebud. I savor his scent, then eat him.



BIOGRAPHY

Carlo Paulo Pacolor is a non-binary writer and director of stories, drama, and film based in Quezon City, Philippines. Some of their recent works include: *Radyo Drama*, a radio drama mini-series about an unbelievable queer family (the first three episodes can be streamed here: spoti.fi/3p33tkn); concept photography for Jaya Jacobo's essay "Where Her Breast Wasn't There: Transfemininity and the Philippine Modern' (MoMA commissioned, C-Map Asia Fellow initiated); "The Incredible Tenderness of Faggots" won first prize, Short Story Category for the first Normal Awards for Gender-Inclusive Literature, University Center for Gender and Development, Philippine Normal University, and also included in the anthology [*Lamyos: New LGBTQ Fiction from the Philippines*](#) (UP Press x Likhaan through Global Grace). All of their collaborative projects mostly include their loose collective, Haus of Pacolor, made up of queer, trans, and enbie cultural practitioners and creatives. In 2021 they opened Mebuyen, a mutable, transdisciplinary studio in Tandang Sora, Quezon City.