



Trust Not Truth

by Isla Leaver-Yap

The anecdote is a type of shorthand narrative that neither relies on factual verification nor general acceptance. Rather, it is an uneasy form that can be deployed both as personal evidence and future parable; it vouches for and validates an individual's attitude by example. And, because the oral anecdote allows shortcuts in the conventions of the spoken monologue (in that it can effectively intervene in the flow of conversation), it allows the speaker immediate recourse to bring up specific social and situational experiences that have distinguished them from everyday realities, without need for the narrative to progress through the linear and ornamented conventions of proposition, reason, example, and conclusion. This quality of encapsulated and embodied learning characterises the anecdote as a crucially effective form in communicating knowledge within small communities whose cultural histories and inheritance remain partial. The anecdote, after all, is the structure of the *petite histoire*, and is particularly suited to articulating narratives that stem from spaces of isolation and singularity.

Obscure and informal by definition, the anecdote has historically been the narrative of the fool or jester, whose witty half-truths are rhetorical artefacts. In the instance of both fool and jester, inference and context are everything, and the obliqueness of anecdotal content often protects the speaker from repercussions. To seemingly state an experience without judgement, for example, one might better speak safely, and yet successfully communicate a certain attitude or idea nonetheless. Obscurity is preserved; the user is protected. Just as gossip is a primarily oral form of illegitimate (and thus potentially radical) communication, so too can the anecdote be considered a debased form of communal reportage that circulates both in speech and writing. But, although both gossip and anecdote give the author flexible editorial control over content, the former is characterised as speaking of an external subject absent at the point of telling, while the latter can also speak of one's own experience and how it is different from one's expectations. Thus, the form of the anecdote lubricates movement between individual perception and one's ability to influence and participate in one's cultural inheritance.

It is useful to think of cultural inheritance as something akin to a downward gravitational pull. Acting as a facet of history, cultural inheritance often comes down from above, sometimes forcefully, and is marked by generational knowledge transfer. Narratives are complex and intertwined, desiring reverence and repetition. Icons are presented to us, and, from this array, we are sometimes able to choose what to favour, construct, and mythologise, or, indeed, debase; however, sometimes we are forced to choose. We learn codes, gestures, and sentiments, and, within the context of our communities, we are encouraged and permitted to re-enact these behaviours. This is how legacies emerge and stabilise.

Anecdotes can facilitate this history-building, but, as radically mobile kernels of personal knowledge, they can also undermine the stability of large cultural inheritance narratives. They have agency. This is largely because anecdotes care little for authenticity. Authenticity in cultural inheritance is prized, but anecdotes need not even be true—they must simply be trusted. And, regardless of their veracity to real life events, anecdotes often relay negative experiences and appear confessional. The form is easily suffused with micro-narratives of racism, misogyny, half-caught lines of verbal abuse, and violence.

Yet, within minority communities whose cultural inheritance is yet to congeal into generalised narratives, or whose authenticity has been forcefully eroded and obscured, anecdotes are a potential resource for identifying what an inheritance might even look like. They are the obdurate remainders, resembling artefacts of folk history when gathered. The provisional nature of the anecdote is well suited to articulating forms of queer subjectivity, not least for its specificity, antagonism to larger narratives, and qualities of self-validation. Sure, anecdotes can be selectively sampled, excluded, or simply forgotten. But whereas queer subjectivity is a category that is constantly in antagonism with its definitional formation, the anecdote appears in solidarity with its refusal to generalise, police, or glorify content. Too unruly and casual for such consolidation, it instead seeks out intimate and trusted connections through which its content might proliferate and move

swiftly to find correlates of experience and knowledge. The anecdote continues to desire an audience.

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I hate the bathrooms at Heathrow Airport. I know all airports are explicitly without community, culture, history, gradations of publicness and intimacy, I don't know why but always in Heathrow I always get called out when I go into the women's toilets. I think it's the lack of public spaces in the airports that encourage people to aggressively carve out gender spaces in bathrooms.

You see it was a two family apartment and ah and... a two family house! And then one day the little boy found the other little boy that lived upstairs the family who lived upstairs in the upstairs floor and the little boy who was less than seven, the lonely little boy, the lonely little boy was less than seven, I know that because we didn't leave Columbus until I was seven, I know it, I was under seven and I took a match and I lit it and I pulled out the other little boy's penis and burnt his penis with a match

And this guy staggered towards me. I thought he was going to call me a faggot but instead careered towards me and laughed in my face, "What are you? A real fucking Jackie Chan, that's what you are." I was so ready for something about me looking gay I forgot I was Chinese. I walked off and later I felt ashamed for not saying anything back. But what do you say to something like that? Jackie Chan isn't a bad guy. I've still not figured out a comeback, or even if it was an insult in the first place.

The room I was in was my hospital room. Blood, as if I was pissing, pissing like a man only straight upward without arcing, shot up from my cunt in thin streams. I saw two thin streams. My blood hit the top of the pale hospital walls, even the ceiling. I thought what a mess, just like in a movie. Then, there were more than two streams. The hospital walls had become red, just like in CARRIE. The doctor was taking his time somewhere. The nurse who had gone to fetch him, or some nurse, walking into the room and seeing the bloodiness, rang the emergency bell, just like she had been taught to do.

Finally, the nurses put their arms around me and told me they were going to take care of me.

I remember when I came out, I didn't even know I was 'Asian.' I thought I was like everyone else—just gay. Alienated from our own sexuality, the only way we become sexualized is through the predatory consumption of a rice queen. With little presence in the Western erotic imagination, we find we have even less power when it comes to our presence on the sexual menu.

When i was like 12 i tried to figure out Second Life for an hour. i was a completely naked completely hairless #FFFFFF woman floating through the sky before being trapped in an infinite latex strip mall (a highly prophetic event)). burner identities parachuting nervous micro-selves through the atmosphere where they exploded spectacularly on the virtual landscapes below. identities that solidify as they gain social capital, becoming less mobile. social capital triggers phase changes in identity. hyperproduce humanity | queerness | feminism | transness via social networks that demand confession. build fortresses that defend a place one no longer cares about. identity costs social capital. it costs 500 crystals to be a Woman, with knock-off Woman Lite, Wom, Womn, woman, F, w., vv, WMN, for 25-100 crystals and you can GET A LOAN.

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