

Luigi Amara*

Intestine Insurgency

Illustrated by Amanda Mijangos**

Dissatisfaction, rage, or the need for change have often led to a bomb going off. At the end of every lit fuse is the flame of indignation, which after accumulating too much pressure cannot but produce a racket that is easy to confuse with the absurd, with an excessive —if not double-edged— temper tantrum, particularly when it has criminal repercussions. Despite the categorical nature of its negation, the echo of a libertarian bomb is rather a hollow sound, a question: what for? Why against them? Why in that way? Dynamite establishes an unequivocal “no” that tries to boom over all things and thus annul with terror the efforts of words and the attempts of the imagination.

The world that flies through the air has ended by being an aesthetic phenomenon: the shards and landscapes of rubble and twisted iron, the fire and the bodies reduced to pieces of jigsaw puzzles are the delight of the mass media, which reproduce them ad nauseam and without the slightest blush, perhaps because that way they run them into the ground and neutralize them, making them entertainment. The explosion of a bomb is the ideal pretext for exploitation by the media. Transfigured into a pop event, the explosion is offered up on a platter to the retina, perhaps achieving the status of a work of art, as Stockhausen said about the razing of the Twin Towers, but without any effective practical consequence except to make the situation worse, to further deteriorate the conditions that created the need for dynamite in the first place: more surveillance, more repression, more arbitrary behavior, great incentives for the police. . . . Molotov’s strategy has become senseless, not because the spirit behind it is obsolete or because the explosions should be bigger, but because it promotes and even justifies the system’s intransigence. For every homemade bomb, there is a projectile made with the latest technology waiting to counter it. And a network of prophylactic, persecutory, totalitarian measures that will soon make daily life something very similar to a picnic at a military base.

The bomb has lost its effectiveness as a tool for confrontation because it is too conventional a device. There’s nothing more hackneyed than using explosives and, at the same time, nothing more inane, more *démodé*. If the powerful have depend-


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I demand the right to piss and shit in different colors.

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ed on gunpowder to keep the system that benefits them in place, what is the sense in playing a game of explosions with them that is clearly uneven? Isn't it contradictory that the means for producing a real change have let themselves be beaten by paralysis and the lack of inventiveness? How will a radical transformation of daily life be made if we try to achieve it using routine tools and explosives?

From the moral point of view, bombs are reprehensible because they are murderous, but the biggest condemnation of their antiestablishment use is their symbolic fatigue. Creative paralysis in methods of insurgency is a pathetic way of contributing to their failure, a pyrotechnic enthusiasm that results in strengthening the other side.

The perfect bomb is the one that seems the least like one. The latent, unexpected bomb, situated anywhere. Everyday things, a laugh, a dance, a yawn, are all loaded with dynamite; day-to-day acts, art, standing in a line, even shit—especially shit—are brimming with fiery material. Suffice it to find the end of the fuse for them to blow up in the face of those who never expected it. Suffice it to find that fuse. And light it.

Old Forms of Dynamite

Defecating, for example, can be a subversive act. Extroversion with regard to bowel movements has its provocative, liberating side, above all when it is authentic extroversion, a deliberate, iconoclastic form of behavior, and not the simple satisfaction of an imperious need at an unfortunate moment. From our childhood, once we have understood that having a bowel movement in just any old corner of the house is frowned upon and will prompt a scolding, we feel the uncontrollable urge to do it—a spontaneous and perhaps unconscious urge, which in any case is interpreted as a challenge. So, without really knowing why, we leave our turds strewn here and there as though they were gifts, behind the armchair or on the couch or in the middle of the hall, in the manner of the criminal who, not content with his misdeeds, leaves behind signs so that later the authorship of “his oeuvre” can be recognized and not go unnoticed.

Although I don't remember fully, I have it on good authority that my preferred places for this elementary form of rebellion were drawers. Perhaps I intuited that the artistic effect upon discovery would be more subtle and long-lasting (the surprise could be effected many days or months later and, for that very reason, it could also envelope me with that boosted wonder reserved for us by having forgotten). But perhaps my behavior was simply due to that satisfaction that we have all felt in the face of the solidity and roundness of our own stool, a satisfaction that at an early age can very well be confused with a narcissistic achievement, with the feat of creation, even if discovered in your own vital functions. And then, it must have seemed natural to me to put those treasures safely away, preserving as they deserve those small works that I gave the world—not without

difficulty. I don't know to what complexity or superstition my behavior could be attributed, but what is certain is that, years later, during a move, my parents came across one of these pieces of mischief, dried out and white, in a desk drawer behind some important documents, and almost fossilized. It was not until that day that that usual, intimate mass (which does not hide its similarity to a projectile and in all probability foreshadowed the aerodynamic form of the bullet and the torpedo) threw in front of my open mouth the irresistible shadow of a time bomb. It was precisely in that long-ago afternoon, when the scandal of a piece of ammunition made of shit in an unexpected place presented itself with the exaggeration of a kind of triumph, that I glimpsed for the first time the explosive profile of excrement. And the unlimited possibilities of what I now am pleased to call "Intestinal Insurgency" opened up before me, like the doors to the bathroom after anxious hours of urgency and holding it.

In the Beginning There Was The Bowel Movement

Beyond the undeniable pleasure of urinating outside, an act that mixes joys of very different orders, defecating alfresco, when it is not the result of getting the chills and desperation, takes on a certain political tenor, becoming a silent proclamation, as powerful as it is primal. The acrimoniousness of showing others the moment in which we yield to the pressure of the body, a completely animal moment, familiar to all of us and that nevertheless is repulsive or insolent when it escapes the limits of the strictly private, has symbolic repercussions depending on the place, the circumstances, and even the surfaces on which it is performed.

Crap is ideal as an affront because it is at the same time tangible and emblematic—in addition to smelly. In contrast with an insult, which may go in one ear and out the other, a caca cake offered on a platter has the—let us say—"conceptual" vigor of an offense, but also the "physical" material consequences of a punch in the face, in the sense that it marks the enemy in a more flagrant, insidious way than a simple bruise or swelling lump. And while it well could be thought that the mark left by shit is ephemeral and has limited scope, suffice it to consider the commotion waiting for us in its mental wake, in that trail that will wander through the corridors of the imagination down through many years, less pestilent than obsessive.

Although the lacerating force of excrement has always been recognized by language and there seems to be no more archaic form of scandalizing than recurring to the subterfuge of the scatological, it is well known that a single brick laid says more than a thousand words. Verbal shit does not stink and, of course, neither can it be smeared. No matter how explicit and daring it manages to be, no matter if one of its motivations is to destabilize those of "good conscience" in the name of excrement-based insurgency, the only thing that copro-terrorism limited to the sphere of linguistics, the subversive literature revolving around bowel movements, will produce is a second-rate, derivative, lukewarm fit of the heaves, an abstract jolt.

In this sense, I think that the authentic modern pioneer of the excrement-based attack, the more or less muffled initiator of this old form of insurgency, who dared to take the leap from the merely symbolic to the material concretion without subterfuges of any kind, was the Italian artist Piero Manzoni. In 1961, as an affront in the core of the art system, he was daring enough to can his own shit in 30-gram containers to sell it, no less, at the price of its weight in gold.

This truly genius piece describes the general state of art and at the same time implies an improvement on it or its reduction to the absurd through the clever move of using the very postulates and practices that have led to that general state, where one's own shit preserved *au naturel*, if presented in the proper manner, can be sold for as much money as gold. The piece, I was saying, may not have taken on its definitive form, may not have unleashed all its subversive and paradoxical potential until the artist's shit revealed itself in all its indissoluble, fetid materiality as an authentic time-bomb. Fermented by the heat, accumulating flammable and undoubtedly toxic gasses that swirled around in the can, one fine day, the shit exploded like a stick of dynamite planted on the foundations of the art market. The unfortunate collector had paid its price in gold, but now that oh-too-famous shit slipped around on his suit lapels, once again converted into simple shit, in coagulated caca, stinky, ordinary, and —what is even better— no longer saleable.

The Dove of Peace

Because it leaves a mark and is in itself synonymous with stain, because it degrades everything it touches and extends its excrement-based domain to several yards around it, shit is a weapon of war unsurpassed in elegance and power, despite several millennia of arms races. When conventional weapons have stopped impressing the imagination, when the revolver makes a child smile and the atomic mushroom cloud is depicted as the background in entertaining commercials in which bottles of Coca-Cola are used to make a toast, that's where the white dove appears, flying, obese and rather a show-off, through the air, sick to death of its peaceful, inoffensive, sixtyish, hokey image, and lets fall on our head its almost liquid, greenish-white guano, the oldest bomb in the world, but still the most effective.

A good or bad omen, an easy divine joke, dove caca is the best reminder that excrement-based ridicule still allows for certain types of refinement. And every time I hear of a dynamite attack in the world, every time that the news talks about nitroglycerine and fuses and detonators and innocent victims, my mind by pitiful automatic reflex goes back to the white dove; yes, to the white dove, but the dove that joyfully defecates during its flight. And then, in place of the images of horror and killing, I counter with the delicate, almost poetic free fall of its equally white dribble of ordure, that inoffensive blob that, in its own way, oh how it stings and disgusts and embarrasses.

Those discontents of our time have not been able to find in shit the key that allows them to raise their indignation to a form of street art. After all, a projec-

tile made of shit leaves scars that are hard to close, and their effects are as plastic and photogenic as those of blood and twisted iron. I would have no hesitation in classifying the substitution of shit for dynamite as revolutionary, since it would make terrorism a highly creative activity, worthy of aesthetic applause. Instead of being universally repudiated for their murders, terrorists would be able to introduce a joyful excrement-based terror, foul, absolutely caca-osmic, which would immediately provoke an endless number of symbolic connotations. Shit explosions, guano bombs, threats with unbearable gasses, booger sharpshooters. . . . This would be a kind of jovial, imaginative, contagious terrorism—anybody would swear that it was sketched by cartoonists Jis and Trino—that would also be victimless, although of course, not completely clean. . . . Who would not celebrate that here and there our unrepresentable authorities fell into dun-colored, liquid shit traps? Who could suppress a little smile when they found out that the toilets in the Stock Market were “on the rise,” suddenly turned into bubbling fountains?

To a great extent, dynamite attacks are repudiated because they are obsolete forms of rebellion that correspond to a stagnant, deadly idea of intervention. Obsessed with fundamentalisms and ideologies, blinded by the mists of their own anger, terrorists have not taken the time to sit down on a park bench to think placidly about the pigeons with the close attention they deserve. This is already suspicious in and of itself, since it denotes I don't know what fondness for the hideouts and the shadows that makes it impossible for them, like authentic curmudgeons, to take the sun amidst our fellow men like any truly self-respecting subversive. But this kind of behavior, more than suspicious, is obtuse, above all if we realize that parks and public plazas in all the world's cities are invaded by the plague of pigeons, those ubiquitous winged rats, disguised as tame. And the thing is that, it's never an excess, above all if you're a terrorist, to stop and reflect on how such an ungraceful bird, which cannot keep its head still on its neck for more than two seconds and which only with great difficulty grovels toward you to thank you for a few crumbs, could have been turned into the unmistakable symbol of peace!

If one carefully observes pigeons, if, like dilettante ethologists we follow their flight and we don't take our eyes off them, we will notice the most noteworthy of their gastro-intestinal habits: we will discover that pigeons have made the statues of national heroes the perfect target for their shooting practice. Encouraged by the significance of this animal behavior and sharpening the scientific eye a bit more, we will note that pigeons have a predilection for the bald spots of our national heroes, perhaps because the bursting of their bombs is much more thunderous on a smooth surface, and, also, if we are to concede some aesthetic sensibility to these nervous creatures, a much more rotund surface. Shit bombs falling right on the thick heads of our bald authorities! What a source of inspiration for the seditious spirit! What a delicious irony that the key to the renovation of the dynamite attack, of the new art of copro-insurgency is on plain view of all precisely in the universal emblem of peace! **MM**

