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**Narratives of Mobility: The (Living) Dead as Transcultural Migrants in Bolaño's  
2666**

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## 0. Introduction

In Roberto Bolaño's novel *2666*, published in 2004, transcultural mobility primarily manifests itself in the form of long-winded geographical itineraries that lead the protagonists through a wide variety of places spread all over the world; these itineraries end up in the fictitious Mexican city of Santa Teresa, the incarnation of the real Ciudad Juárez, which marks both the contact zone for migration processes taking place between Mexico and the United States and the narrative intersection point where all spatial movements appear to converge.

The novel consists of five parts, each of which maps out an entire world of its own; thus, the "Parte de los críticos" describes the encounter of four specialists in German literary studies from Paris, London, Barcelona and Turin who are engaging in research on the German writer Hans Reiter, whose pseudonym is Benno von Archimboldi. This part is followed by further sections whose protagonists in part meet by chance in Santa Teresa, culminating in the fifth section, the "Parte de Archimboldi", which presents a biography of Hans Reiter, following traces that his movements left all over the globe. All narrative lines of action, in which representations of violence recur ostentatiously, are organized around a series of more than a hundred femicides committed in Santa Teresa, which are narrated in the fourth and longest part of the novel, the "Parte de los crímenes". The descriptions included in this section refer to the series of real murders that have been occurring in Ciudad Juárez since the 1990s, comprising between 370 and 600 victims, a majority of which could not be solved and therefore provoked harsh criticism from numerous human rights organizations directed against the work of the investigative authorities. [1]

This brief survey of the novel's narrative structure already indicates that Bolaño's "maximalist novel" (Ercolino) [2] assumes the form of a global narrative which relies largely on the exploration of geophysical and geocultural space carried out within the movements of the protagonists, which form the central narrative focus of the entire novel. These movements document a certain "worldliness" of the narration [3] that contributes to defining the specific 'geopolitical' dimension of the literary text [4], which characterizes numerous narrative forms in the current phase of globalization, and generally adopts two forms: On the one hand, during the last few decades, literary (and scientific) discourses have developed a semantic framework that describes the world as the site of emergence of a 'world community', a global village (formulated in terms used by Marshall McLuhan), [5] which, being brought about and sustained by the progressive efficiency of technological networks, negates social and cultural differences and constitutes a consensual form of human community that in its modes of cultural interaction is able to overcome both spatial and temporal boundaries. This description of globalization presents an essentially utopian vision of the 'deterritorialized' world [6], which is marked by the suspension of both physical and social space and generates an all-encompassing homogeneous and universal culture. To this

utopian world vision is opposed a geopolitical description which conceives of the world as a 'reterritorialized' spatial order based on socio-cultural practices of inclusion and exclusion which create asymmetrical power relations and rely on territorial borders (such as the frontier separating Mexico and the United States) that guarantee and regulate the interaction between global centers and varying local peripheries.

It is evident that Bolaño's novel belongs to the second type of global narrative: In 2666, the spatial movements carried out by the protagonists do not serve primarily as a vehicle to express the euphoric perception of the unlimited geocultural extensions of the global world. On the contrary, these movements are set in close relation to phenomena such as disappearance, diaspora and forced migration, which utterly suspend the narrated space-time continuum and frequently appear to be connected with experiences related to significant affective ruptures and traumas marking the protagonists' lives. [7] Yet in Bolaño's novel, the suspension of such continuity also shows on another level, as in the narrative text the topographical movements carried out by the protagonists often combine with topological forms of mobility that come to be closely linked with the appearance of revenants, vampires, zombies and other 'unreal' figures that possess the property of transgressing the physical boundaries of time and space as well as the demarcation lines separating the living from the dead. Starting out from the novel's allusions to varying 'undead' or 'spectral' figures (such as vampires or zombies), the following analysis will, first, briefly reconstruct the general characteristics of the representation of zombies and other revenants as they occur in particular in film narratives that appeared between the 1960s and the first decade of the 21st century. Second, a cursory reading of the novel will focus on the literary construction and cultural significance inherent in different forms of mobility which appear to be intimately linked to the emergence of spectral figures whose intermittent appearance throughout the textual universe contributes to constituting an all-encompassing network of transcultural exchange and communication.

### **1) The Living and the Dead: Sites of Encounters [8]**

In 2666 references to the existence of dead persons, vampires, zombies and other 'revenants' who challenge the boundaries of time and space inherent in the geophysical world are omnipresent. The allusions to varying (un-)dead figures whose individual existences appear to be closely related to phenomena of mobility and migration come to display a broad range of political significations which turn the (living) dead into ambivalent liminal figures [9] representing the specific nature and functioning of the cultural order itself. If, on the one hand, they resist being integrated into the order of human community and serve to irritate considerably the classifications underlying its functioning, on the other, they appear to be not entirely excluded from this order, and

thus prove capable of incorporating the very boundaries from which each culture gains a further understanding of its own practices and regulations. Furthermore, in Bolaño's novel, references to the (un-)dead are frequently tied to the cultural history of the zombies, and combined with the description of changing forms of agency symptomatic of modern globalization processes. In the second part of the novel, the professor of philosophy, Óscar Amalfitano, suddenly finds among his own books an unknown book written by the Galician poet Rafael Dieste; in his search for the reasons which may account for the strange appearance of the book, he compares himself to a zombie, [10] who, in the episode, appears to represent a being who is deprived of the power to exercise his free will or self-control and who, in a "momento de sumisión absoluta" (243), [11] has yielded his own will to the foreign and inscrutable power of the book, which now seems to take on human agency and authority. The cultural-historical implications underlying the bond that exists between human beings and figures of the living dead are explained more explicitly in the programmatic conference entitled "Literatura + enfermedad = enfermedad", published in 2003, which presents the outlines of Bolaño's conception of modern literature. Referring to the famous verse taken from Baudelaire's poem *Voyage*, "Un oasis de horror en medio del desierto de aburrimiento", [11] which also serves as the motto preceding the novel *2666*, and starting out from the self-description formulated by the lyrical speaker in Baudelaire's poem as well as from various forms of 19th-century travel poetry, Bolaño here traces out a comprehensive 'psychogram' of modern society that proves to be deeply rooted in a melancholic disposition of the individual, which turns human beings into zombies: "Para salir del aburrimiento, para escapar del punto muerto, lo único que tenemos a mano, y no tan a mano, también en esto hay que esforzarse, es el horror, es decir el mal. O vivimos como zombis, como esclavos alimentados con soma, o nos convertimos en esclavizadores, en seres malignos" (151). If the programmatic essay associates the particular mode of being represented by zombies with the mental disposition of the modern individual ("aburrimiento"), it is important to note, however, that this mode of being is integrated at the same time into an utterly Manichean political vision of modernity that views zombies as modern slaves, as victims of a social formation, against whom are contrasted, on the opposite end of the cultural field, the slaveowners and merchants who embody threatening social forces of 'evil'. [12] Bolaño's diagnostic account of modern literature and society thus refers implicitly back to the colonial history of the zombies whose origins, according to recent research, reach back to religious notions related to the living dead in West Africa, which, during the period of transatlantic slavery, were first transferred to the Caribbean before being taken, at a later stage in the history of slavery, to the United States and Europe. [13] Thus the description of modern society which divides the community into victims and offenders and associates this division with a metaphorical identification of zombies and slaves not only delineates a contemporary biopoetics of horror but also traces the outlines of a comprehensive genealogy of modernity, establishing a

close link between its historic emergence and the rise of colonial migration movements that form an integral part of the cultural history of the zombies.

In the novel itself the living dead occasionally feature as real protagonists or human beings, such as the woman mentioned in the third part with whom the African-American journalist Fate leads a telephone conversation, and who appears to him as a person who, having just escaped from a cemetery, “conoce de primera mano el planeta de los muertos” (347). These beings generally represent modes of existence defined by their intermediary or liminal status, which marks the transition from what is human to what is felt to be non-human – as becomes most evident in the final part of the novel (“La parte de Archiboldi”), where the figure of the vampire forms the topic of a conversation that takes place in Count Dracula’s castle during World War II. In the conversation, which focuses on the origin and identity of Dracula himself, on the one hand, the figure of the undead comes to blur the boundary separating human beings from monstrous appearances, as the Count appears both as a possible Romanian patriot engaged in violent resistance against the Turks and as a sheer “monstruo” longing for blood. [14] The figure of the vampire thus bears a close affinity to the artistic creations produced by the Italian Early Baroque painter Giuseppe Arcimboldo, whose name recurs in 2666 in Hans Reiter’s pseudonym Benno von Archiboldi, and whose well-known portraits consisting of fruits, flowers and vegetables equally represent ‘monstrous’ or liminal hybrid structures that are composed of human and non-human elements. They serve to explore the boundaries of the order of nature as, according to current 16th-century classification schemes derived from Scholastic natural philosophy, they are situated in ‘extra-natural’ areas that are opposed both to the realm of the natural and to its counterpart, the supernatural. [15] On the other hand, the conversation mentions a Romanian mathematician whose existence in an asylum is associated with an “estar enterrado en vida”, (859) a state which integrates death in life and therefore represents a vampire-like mode of existence that complements the integration of life in death as realized by the zombies, and also appears to interlace two heterogeneous regimes of temporality. Finally, the third part of the novel contains a short commentary on director Robert Rodriguez and his famous vampire movie *From Dusk Till Dawn* (*Del crepúsculo al amanecer*), a mixture between a road movie and a splatter movie; here, the Mexican bar in which the transformation of native female dancers and US-American truckers into bloodthirsty vampires takes place turns out to be the top of a Pre-Columbian cult site, an Aztec pyramid hidden in the sand, and thereby reveals a convergence of the contemporary US-American culture with the pre-colonial Mexican world, which expresses the inextricable entanglement of differing cultural spaces and temporalities.

These hints at revenants, zombies or vampires already allude to particular forms of intracultural or transcultural liminality and mobility which are also characteristic of contemporary filmic representations of the undead. Thus, in zombie movies like George Romero’s *Night of the*

Living Dead (1968), Dawn of the Dead (1977) and Day of the Dead (1985) or in Robin Campillo's *Les revenants* (2003), despite their mass appearance and their mutilated bodies, the figures of the (un-)dead display properties and attitudes belonging to the living and represent 'spectral' figures (in the terms used by Jacques Derrida) [16] who cause sensible irritations and disturbances in the everyday life of the social community. Coinciding with Christian images of bodily revenants dating from previous centuries [17] and with traditional Caribbean notions of zombies conceived as *corps cadavres*, [22] they are marked by the physical materiality of their bodies, which allows them to develop their own habitual attitudes and routines, corresponding to the specific practices and modes of existence exhibited by the living and serving to satisfy their basic physical needs (like eating and drinking) and to regulate their everyday lives. Even if visible differences between the living and the dead persist throughout the majority of filmic representations, it is important to note, however, that due to the materiality of their bodies the dead no longer appear to represent the instance of the 'other' defined as the inversion or the exact reverse copy of the living, but gradually come to separate themselves from their counterparts. In fact, as in filmic representations dating from the last decade, the undead progressively cease to define their own mode of existence as a function of the living, yet paradoxically start to 'live' their own being-dead and therefore obtain a 'life' of their own. [19]

Furthermore, as the figure of the zombie functions as a social agent whose primary role consists in articulating and framing the relations between the community of the living and the community of the dead, its appearance displays an intracultural dynamic which, at least in nuce, also gains a transcultural impact. As a general rule, the presence of zombies indicates the emergence of a social crisis which frequently appears to be closely linked with particular forms of mobility expressed through their bodily movements. From this perspective, the slow, uncoordinated and almost mechanical movements of their bodies come to symbolize either a temporary suspension or the total dissolution of the social order defining communal life, [20] as they transform urban space into an apocalyptic scenery or a ghost town whose topographic physiognomy seems to announce the edge of doom. This is also confirmed by more recent movies that have been produced since the beginning of the 21st century: Even if in Campillo's film, as has been foregrounded by recent criticism, [21] the appearance of the revenants resembles a traffic jam, which serves to indicate the momentary breakdown of human transport or circulation, but which by no means corresponds to the breakdown of the entire social life of the community, their bodily movements create a sensible distance between the living and the dead which, in turn, illustrates a fundamental heterogeneity and asynchronicity of temporalities. Ultimately, these can be seen to define diverging rhythms which serve to articulate differing forms of communal life and modes of social mobility which, in their complex interplay, oscillate between modern realizations of the disciplinary society and the specific conditions of existence implemented by modern societies

of control. While the former are based on the efficiency of specific 'milieus of inclusion' (such as schools, hospitals or prisons), [22] societies of control tend to replace the techniques and dispositives of social surveillance pertaining to these milieus by open and pervasive environments (such as transit zones or virtual space environments to which individuals gain access by using passwords) and by more moderate control processes which modulate flexible mechanisms of adaptation to the changing conditions of existence. [23]

If the emergence of the figures of the living dead is viewed from this perspective, it can be noted that, on the one hand, the zombies represent a disquieting menace of the social, cultural and political ordering of human society, which is the reason why the latter seeks to survey and to exclude them from the community of the living by establishing a strict and stable separation between the respective spheres of life. For although the dead and the living move in the same places, such as shopping malls, streets and residential buildings, there exists an invisible border that at times comes to be materialized and rendered visible and that serves to implement a spatial dissociation separating the two groups. Thus the encounters with the undead demonstrate the validity of the mechanisms of disciplinary societies which seek to confine the 'other' to the closed areas or 'milieus of inclusion' – as is suggested in the movies by the use of the camera perspective which frequently views the zombies either from a bird's eye view (s. fig. 1) or confronts them frontally as a compact, hostile horde and consequently functions as a particular filmic device of performing social surveillance and control. However, more recent zombie movies from the last ten years reveal considerable transformations regarding both the representation of bodily movements and the forms of spatial and social mobility exposed by the figures of the zombies. Despite their 'multitudinal' appearance, which distinguishes them from individual human beings, their presence not only serves to explore, negotiate and articulate the general principles and practices structuring human community (as is the case in the current series *The Walking Dead*), but they also prove capable of being increasingly integrated into life routines as these routines, in turn, gradually seem to approach conventional zombie attitudes and practices. [24] As is suggested by the occasional acceleration of bodily movements performed by the dead which indicate a notable reduction or suspension of the distance separating the living and the dead, [25] the disciplinary strategy of confining the zombies to a potentially controllable milieu of inclusion by attributing to them a sphere of their own, as a general rule, comes to be gradually replaced by more flexible circulation movements which follow the less rigid regulation mechanisms used in societies of control. This progressive convergence of attitudes and gestures exhibited by the living and the dead [26] also shows in the change of the camera perspective which in more recent movies no longer focuses on zombies from a panoramic bird's eye view but, frequently, tends to accompany their movements alongside them, presenting the undead as members of the community of the living who enjoy the same rights as the latter (s. fig. 2). Thus, it can be

concluded that the movements of the revenants serve to document specific forms of mobility which are mainly derived from the physical materiality of their bodies and whose central function consists in articulating and negotiating intracultural tensions inherent in the social community of the living.

## **2) Mobility and Globality: The Dead as Transcultural Migrants in 2666**

In the novel 2666, the multitude of revenants or (living) dead persons that appear throughout the five sections of the text also illustrate differing forms of intra- and transcultural mobility which become most palpable within the extensive narration dedicated to the series of femicides in the fourth part of the novel. Viewed from a narratological perspective, it is significant, first of all, that the narration deliberately takes recourse to documentary texts such as Sergio González Rodríguez's investigation *Huesos en el desierto*, [27] whose integration into the text confers to Bolaño's novel a liminal status regarding the particular mode of narration employed, which is marked by a persistent oscillation between fact and fiction. [28] At the same time, the novel quite ostentatiously approaches the film genre of the so-called snuff movie, a genre which first appeared in Argentina, and pretends to show real violations and assassinations of women generating a particular *effet de réel* closely linked with excesses of violence directed against women. [29]

Furthermore, the novel takes recourse to a specific mode of narration derived from the tradition of the *novela policíaca*, whose main genre characteristics are evoked *ex negativo* by the literary critics in the first part of the novel: "Hay que hacer investigación, crítica literaria, ensayos de interpretación, panfletos divulgativos si así la ocasión lo requiriera, pero no este híbrido entre fantaciencia y novela negra inconclusa, dijo Espinosa, y Pelletier estuvo en todo de acuerdo con su amigo" (82). If the mention of the genres of the "fantaciencia" and "the novela negra inconclusa" primarily refers to Latin-American realizations of the detective novel which frequently use elements taken from the fantastic tradition, [30] the narrative structure of the "Parte de los crímenes", the longest part of the novel, reveals itself to be more complex as it combines elements of the classical *policial*, the 'novel of enigma' as initiated by Edgar Allan Poe, and the *serie negra*. The representation of more than a hundred feminine corpses at first follows the narrative scheme of the novel of enigma which is marked by a double plot structure, the dissociation of the line of action into a crime story, which narrates what has happened, and the ensuing investigation story which describes the gathering of information about the crime and the efforts undertaken by the detective to solve the enigma. [31] In 2666, the description of the first three dead bodies already illustrates the general narrative scheme which also underlies the following case representations: the first detailed description of a human corpse which formally resembles a forensic report



is marked by the complete absence of a crime story informing the reader about the criminal act, as the story begins abruptly with a precise description of the clothing, the place and the circumstances under which the dead body was found. [32] It does contain, however, the nucleus of an investigation story which is deployed within a conversation taking place between the police officer and two anonymous women and which displays the inversion of narrative causality typical for the genre, for within the text's chronological ordering the presentation of the effect (death, the dead body) precedes the narration of the cause (the crime, its story). Similar narrative schemes are also to be found in the following two descriptions, each of which combines the crime story with a particular investigation story. The description of the second case contains some rudimentary elements of the crime story as it discloses the incidents preceding the crime – a love triangle centered on the violent encounter between the victim's lover and his business partner – which provides at least a minimal psychological motivation for the crime. [33] In addition, the story of the crime is here combined with a brief description of the police investigation which does indeed lead to the capture of the murderer but closes upon the police officers' insight that the murderer cannot be identical with the one who committed the first crime. [34] The description of the third case, which deploys a 'narration within the narration' presented from the perspective of an eyewitness, gives information about a radio announcer who is shot in the street after having had dinner with her sound engineer; [35] it is followed by a short investigation story offering rival theories concerning the circumstances of the crime and the origin of the assassin. In short, it can be concluded that the detailed narrative account of the femicides takes recourse to central elements and structures belonging to the classic genre of detective fiction which, despite the introduction of numerous stylistic innovations, continues to provide an important narrative model within the Latin-American *novela policíaca*. However, in 2666, the ensuing story of the 'penitent', a male person who desecrates churches, takes on a different form in that it adopts the main narrative elements pertaining to the genre of the hard-boiled novel or the *serie negra*, which not only subordinates the solution-seeking scheme to a pattern of discovery focusing on the corruption and violence of society but also assigns a new role to the figure of the detective, who gradually reveals himself to be intricately involved in the crime. [36] In Bolaño's novel, the hard-boiled model is taken up in an utterly ironic manner as it provides a presentation both of the investigator's personality and of his private life, culminating in a love affair with the director of an asylum recounted in such detail that its narrative description, which complements the narration of the crime, temporarily confers to the *novela policíaca* traits of a romance. [37]

What is decisive in the narrative account of the crime scenes is the fact that despite the obstinate recurrence of structural elements belonging to the genre of detective fiction in Bolaño's novel, its specific narratological function appears to be entirely suspended. If the function of the *novela policíaca* consists in employing various strategies seeking to confer a specific significance

or meaning to death, it is noteworthy that narrative techniques such as these are completely absent from Bolaño's text. In the novel, quite to the contrary, the series of murders manifests itself as the articulation of a logic of serial enumeration, a purely chronological accumulation and a formal combination of recurring thematic elements which eventually come to erase all individual differences between the victims. In its overt departure from conventional representation techniques, the narrative fails to reach a solution for the mystery or enigma underlying the series of crimes and proves utterly incapable of conferring a hermeneutic scheme of signification to the murderous incidents. What remains, then, is the sheer physical presence of feminine corpses in their material immanence, expressing the emergence of the 'real' (in the Lacanian sense of the term) which resists any process of imaginary or cultural-symbolic signification and marks a traumatic gap in the symbolic order. [38] The text thus traces the outlines of a modern esthetics of horror grounded in the purely physical being-in-the-world of the feminine corpses which – due to their mere material presence resisting any interpretive structure of cultural signification – appear to be 'spectral' figures, feminine zombies obtaining a somewhat autonomous existence or a paradoxical narrative 'life' of their own which, however, just like their masculine counterparts, they are forced to live under the conditions of death.

What seems yet more significant than the physical mode of existence which sets the feminine corpses in close affinity to traditional masculine figures of the living dead is the fact that the presence of the female bodies comes to document a transcultural and global dynamic of mobility which once more appears to be intimately related to the colonial history of the zombies. It is due to the specific mode of narration and the repeated appearance of the spectral figures throughout the entire novel that these reveal themselves to be true revenants whose movements come to articulate a spatial mobility of almost infinite extension. This is evident, first of all, in the third part of the novel, the "Parte de Fate", which contains a conversation taking place between the African-American journalist and an older man, a resident of Santa Teresa, who formulates some general observations concerning serial homicides that occurred in European and US-American history, and begins his observations with a commentary on the verbal recording of crimes:

En el siglo XIX, a mediados o a finales del siglo XIX, dijo el tipo canoso, la sociedad acostumbraba a colar la muerte por el filtro de las palabras. Si uno lee las crónicas de esa época se diría que casi no había hechos delictivos o que un asesinato era capaz de conmocionar a todo un país. No queríamos tener a la muerte en casa, en nuestros sueños y fantasías, sin embargo es un hecho que se cometían crímenes terribles, descuartizamientos, violaciones de todo tipo, e incluso asesinatos en serie. [...] Durante la Comuna de 1871 murieron asesinados miles de personas y nadie derramó una lágrima por ellas. Por esa misma fecha un afilador de cuchillos mató a una mujer y a su anciana madre (no la madre de la mujer, sino su propia madre, querido amigo) y luego fue abatido por la policía. La noticia no sólo recorrió los periódicos de Francia sino que

también fue reseñada en otros periódicos de Europa e incluso apareció una nota en el *Examiner* de Nueva York. Respuesta: los muertos de la comuna no pertenecían a la sociedad, la gente de color muerta en el barco no pertenecía a la sociedad, mientras que la mujer muerta en una capital de provincia francesa y el asesino a caballo de Virginia sí pertenecían, es decir, lo que a ellos les sucediera era escribible, era legible. (339)

If this commentary refers to historic mass murders committed during the 17th and 19th century in the context of transatlantic slavery and the Paris Commune, the following parts of the novel contain numerous explicit references to the femicides perpetrated in Santa Teresa which do not remain confined to the “Parte de los crímenes”, but significantly recur in further sections of the text. This is already confirmed by the first part, the “Parte de los críticos”, in which the literary critic Morini, shortly before travelling to Mexico, reads the “horrible” newspaper notice on serial murders written by an Italian journalist and compares the Italian crimes with their Mexican counterparts; he concludes that the particular horror of the latter largely derives from their number, which defines a quality of sheer excess: “La noticia le pareció horrible. En Italia también había asesinatos en serie, pero rara vez superaban la cifra de diez víctimas, mientras que en Sonora las cifras sobrepasaban con largueza las cien” (64). In the third part, the “Parte de Fate”, the serial femicides recur again: Here, they are the topic of a TV reportage watched by the American journalist who, for the first time, gains knowledge about the real crimes committed in Santa Teresa; [39] these incidents broadcasted on TV are not only loosely associated with violent events referring to World War I in Europe but also with criminal offences carried out against African-Americans during the North American history of slave trade; thus, they point once more to the colonial origins of the cultural history of the zombies which also forms the basis for the identification of the modern melancholic subject with the figure of the zombie as formulated in Bolaño’s programmatic lecture on the functions of modern literature.

Taking into account the striking intratextual ‘mobility’ of the feminine corpses, it is no surprise that the dead bodies also recur in further texts written by the author: In particular, they are anticipated in the short novel *Estrella distante* (1996) in which the figure of the fascist poet Carlos Wieder, a military pilot supporting the Pinochet regime, hangs photographs on the walls of his room that show mutilated women whom he himself has previously tortured and murdered (92-102). According to recent criticism, Carlos Wieder represents an art conception which is marked by a profound ambivalence: on the one hand, both his first creative act, which consists in practicing a *poesía aérea* by writing verse in the sky, and the ensuing exhibition of the photographs deliberately take recourse to Chilean (Neo)avant-garde whose representatives, such as Raúl Zurita, who represents the immediate model for Wieder’s ‘air poetry’, critically confront the violence and totalitarianism performed by the military dictatorship. [40] Yet, the series of photographs displaying mutilated dead bodies, at the same time, represents an ‘infamous’ or ‘abject’ art and,

consequently, can be conceived as an immediate prefiguration of the horror realized in the detailed 'forensic' descriptions and serial listing of the dead bodies of mutilated, tortured and killed women presented in the "Parte de los crímenes" and programmatically described in the lecture "Literatura + enfermedad = enfermedad".

These few examples reveal that the obstinate appearance of the feminine corpses throughout Bolaño's oeuvre combines with the transgression of both spatial and temporal borders and, being closely linked to heterogeneous historic events and periods such as the Roman Empire, the French Commune, US-American slave trade and Pinochet's regime, marks a sensible rupture with notions of the globalized world based on the realization of homogeneous spatial-temporal exchange and communication processes which, here, ostentatiously come to be replaced with the experience of the discontinuous arrival of multiple traumata, horrors and acts of violence. The obsessive presence of the feminine dead bodies thus not only confers to these the status of material revenants who, like the figures of the zombies, gradually obtain a physical-corporeal life of their own but also turns them – due to the persistent transgression of spatial-temporal confinements – into true global migrants whose appearance ultimately serves to create a dense network of transcultural entanglements extending far beyond the concrete geopolitical borders that separate national political communities. While zombies, especially those appearing in horror films dating from the period between the 1960s and the 1980s, by means of their bodily movements and the specific attitudes that mark their social behavior come to set in motion a dynamic of mobility which primarily aims at expressing intracultural tensions inherent in the community of the living, the particular mode of narration underlying Bolaño's novel serves to generate corporeal revenants whose appearance in different places of the textual universe, in turn, denotes a form of transcultural migration which takes into account the spatial and temporal interferences and cultural-political entanglements that mark the globalized world. These interferences find their correlates in the narrative structure of the novel itself, which not only recounts a story but also creates a vast network of interrelated narrations which, as each particular story is able to form nodes with other stories or lines of action on every level of the narration, is marked by the absence of a hierarchical ordering and by the interference of heterogeneous spatialities and temporalities.

These spatial-temporal interferences and entanglements, which are most visible in the textual references to the bodies of the dead women, suggest some conclusions regarding the geopolitical function of the global narrative as a whole. Culminating in a serial listing of phobias that embraces the most diverse medical and cultural phenomena ranging from the "sacrophobia" ascribed to the "penitent", to "claustrophobia", "hematophobia", "verbophobia", "vestiophobia", "optophobia", "astrophobia" and "phobophobia" (a type of 'metaphobia' representing the phobia of the phobias themselves) (477-479), the narration or chronicle of the femicides in the "Parte de los crímenes" first of all discloses once more the political function underlying the presence or

appearance of filmic zombies: the feminine dead bodies no longer serve to indicate a temporary crisis of the social community to be overcome in the near future but are associated with a general pathology affecting the communal order as a whole and documenting a deeply pessimistic diagnostic account of the implications and consequences linked with the rise of the global world society.

Yet the bio- and geopolitical functionalization of the murders and the recurring bodies of the dead by no means remain confined to this critical assessment of current globalization processes – as reveals the end of the previously quoted commentary on historic examples of serial murders formulated by the “tipo canoso” in his conversation with the American journalist Fate:

–Bien – dijo el tipo canoso –. Compartiré contigo tres certezas. A: esa sociedad está fuera de la sociedad, todos, absolutamente todos son como los antiguos cristianos en el circo. B: los crímenes tienen firmas diferentes. C: esa ciudad parece pujante, parece progresar de alguna manera, pero lo mejor que podrían hacer es salir una noche al desierto y cruzar la frontera, todos sin excepción, todos, todos. (399)

Naming social modes of existence which, paradoxically, are situated both inside and outside human society, the text recurs almost literally to Giorgio Agamben’s description of the homo sacer, [41] who, within the legal system governing the Roman Empire, represents an outlawed person the killing of whom remains exempt from punishment, as is also indicated by the mention of the historic persecutions of Christians. According to Agamben, the suspension of legality paradoxically entails the legal production of a ‘state of exception’ based on practices of violence which in Modernity coincides with the state of normality of the sovereign order and therefore represents the general *nómos*, the fundamental law governing modern societies; their rise proves to be the product of foundational acts of violence without which no political-social community manages to guarantee and secure its own existence and which, in Bolaño, appear to be closely related to excesses of violence and traumata characteristic of the globalized world. However, as is suggested by the esthetics represented by the fascist artist Carlos Wieder in *Estrella distante*, whose art of violence adopts specific representation techniques from art practices pertaining to the Chilean avant-garde tradition, the representatives of which are committed to opposite political goals, [42] according to Bolaño, in modernity, the relationship between normal society and the ‘state of exception’ is subject to continual displacements and inversions which ultimately come to transform the static constellation of the ‘state of exception’ into flexible and dynamic configurations; within these configurations, which document both the permeability and mobility of transcultural milieus of action as they are implemented by modern societies of control, exception and rule always prove to be strictly reversible. They rely on a principle of flexible interchangeability that also affects the positions of social and political agency, which can always be alternately occupied

by victims and perpetrators, by slaves and slave-owners, and for which the colonial migration history of the zombies appears to provide an indispensable historic matrix.

It can be concluded that due to the specific narrative modes of evoking the dead throughout the entire novel and as a result of their ensuing transgression of spatial-temporal borders, in Bolaño, the figures of the (living) dead carry out topographical and topological movements which serve to create complex connections and entanglements between separate spheres pertaining to the globalized political world; these movements reveal the spectral figures to be transcultural migrants acting on a global scale, figures who take on a double geopolitical meaning: On the one hand, just like the zombies, they serve to indicate moments of crisis existing within contemporary social formations whose fundamental pathologies, in Bolaño, are integrated into a narrative logic of potentially infinite accumulation; on the other, they represent emblematic foundational figures epitomizing basic forms of social communities which, at the beginning of the 21st century, are marked by a transition process which increasingly replaces the closed milieus of action constitutive of traditional disciplinary societies by the open social structures inherent in current societies of control. In the present age of globalization the latter come to represent metastable forms of community which, in overcoming the presumably secure confinements characterizing disciplinary societies, come to establish states of social balance which are marked both by their fundamental flexibility and instability. As is illustrated by the frequent references to excesses of violence alternately related to National Socialism, Latin-American dictatorships or the Roman Empire, these temporary states of balance are persistently threatened by the dissolution of the very order that governs political and social community. In Bolaño, consequently, the form of the global narrative appears as a literary construction and a reflexive diagnosis of the political, social and cultural traumata which are presented as contributing both to the foundational constitution and the destructive violation of the social order underlying the world in the present age of globalization.



Fig. 1: George Romero, Day of the Dead (USA 1985)



Fig. 2: Les revenants (Serie, Canal+, France 2012)

## Endnotes

[1] For a concise account of the real femicides that occurred in Ciudad Juárez, including information about its social background, see Zimmering.

[2] On the conception and characteristics of the “maximalist novel”, which, in the case of Bolaño’s novel, is based on the rupture and hypertrophic enlargement of unitary plot structures realized by geographical ‘transversality’, see Ercolino.

[3] On the connotations and implications underlying the conception of the “worldliness”, which marks in particular the literary production in the current phase of globalization, see Honold. The “worldliness” of literature can also be related to processes of “worlding”, of producing the world, which, according to Djelal Kadir, are a distinctive feature of “world literature” under conditions of globalization; see Kadir.

[4] For a detailed account of the geopolitical dimension of contemporary literature, which includes the distinction between two competing models of description concerning globalization processes, see Werber.

[5] See McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*.

[6] On the spatial implications inherent in the term ‘deterritorialization’ see Gilles Deleuze/ Félix Guattari 1991; see also Gilles Deleuze/Félix Guattari 1980.

[7] According to the suggestive political reading of Bolaño’s narrative oeuvre offered by Sergio Villalobos-Ruminott, the novel as a whole can be even viewed as offering a ‘planetary articulation’ of global war; see Villalobos-Ruminott.

[8] With respect to the following section of this article, I wish to express my gratitude to Emiliano Galarza for numerous suggestions concerning filmic representations of zombies, revenants and other living dead figures.

[9] On the notion of ‘liminality’ see Turner 93-111.

[10] See Bolaño 2666, 242: “Probablemente este libro llegó a mis manos en Laie, pensó, o en La Central [...]. Puede, incluso, que abriera como un zombi el paquete y dejara el libro nuevo sobre la mesilla de noche y el libro de Dieste en la estantería de los libros, abrumado por algo que acabara de ver en la calle [...]” – For a pertinent analysis of this comparison, which, however, situates the appearance of the book primarily within the context of the temporal logic underlying the concept of the ‘readymade’ as it was developed by Marcel Duchamps, see Cuntz (177-220).

[11] See Baudelaire, *Les fleurs du mal*, 166-172.

[12] On the significance the category of ‘evil’ obtains within the novel 2666, see Lainck 2014.

[13] For a concise account of the cultural history of the zombies, see Gudrun Rath, *Zombies*, *Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften* 11-19; likewise, see Hans-W. Ackermann/Jeanin Gauthier (1991), 466-494.

[14] See Bolaño, 2666, 855: “[...] el hombre que frena el impulso conquistador de los turcos se transforma, gracias a un escritor inglés de segunda fila, en un monstruo, en un crápula interesado únicamente por la sangre humana [...]”.

[15] On the distinction between the areas of the natural, the extra-natural and the supernatural in the Early Modern Period, with respect to the ontological status of hybrid or liminal beings, see Lorraine Daston (1991) 93-124.

[16] See Derrida, *Spectres de Marx*.

[17] See Lecouteux, pp. 79f.

[18] See Rath, pp. 49-59.



[19] On the changing forms of interaction taking place between the living and the (un-)dead as exposed in the zombie movies dating from the past four decades, which form the central focus of numerous recent critics, see, among others, Schuck 2014, 73-83; Robnik 2011, 235-258; and Cuntz 2008, 191-226.

[20] On similar biopolitical interpretations focusing the forms of bodily mobility displayed by the zombies and the respective camera angle defining their filmic representation, see Cuntz 2008.

[21] See Cuntz.

[22] See Foucault, *Surveiller et punir*.

[23] See Deleuze 1990, 240-247.

[24] On this striking reciprocity of human activities and zombie attitudes, see Robnik 2011.

[25] This is most evident, for example, in the US-American action movie *World War Z*, produced by Marc Forster in 2013.

[26] Within present filmic representations of zombies, this convergence of attitudes and gestures forms the central focus of the French series *Les revenants* (2012-), in which concrete individuals who possess their own biography return as dead persons into the world of the living.

[27] Sergio González Rodríguez, *Huesos en el desierto*. On the impact González Rodríguez investigation had on Bolaño's novel and on the narrative description of the femicides, see the brief account in Alice Laurel Driver, 51-64.

[28] On the narratological implications underlying the convergence of fictual and factual modes of narration see Genette, *Fiction et diction*.

[29] The film genre of the snuff movie is explicitly discussed in the novel where it is described as a particularly repugnant "modalidad de horror" within the production of pornographic films and narrations; see Bolaño, 2666, 669 f. On partial convergences between the narrative description of the femicides as presented in 2666 and the forms of representation used in the film genre, see Anna Topczewska.

[30] On the rise, the influence and the distinctive narrative features of the Latin-American detective fiction, see among others Jorge Lafforgue and Jorge B. Rivera, *Asesinos de papel. Ensayos sobre narrativa policial*, 11-38, and Amelia S. Simpson, *Detective Fiction from Latin America*.

[31] On this narratological distinction, see Todorov, "The Typology of Detective Fiction" [1966] 2010; also see Schulze-Witzenrath, "Die Geschichten des Detektivromans. Zur Struktur und Rezeptionsweise seiner klassischen Form."

[32] Bolaño, 2666, 443: "La muerta apareció en un pequeño descampado en la colonia Las Flores. Vestía camiseta blanca de manga larga y falda de color amarillo hasta las rodillas, de una talla superior. Unos niños que jugaban en el descampado la encontraron y dieron aviso a sus padres."

[33] Bolaño, 2666, 445.

[34] Bolaño, 2666, 445: "Contra lo que pensaba la policía, llevada a error por la rapidez con la que habían conseguido la primera confesión, Romero [the offender, K.K.] era mucho más duro de lo que aparentaba y no se autoimplicó en el primer crimen."

[35] See Bolaño, 2666, 446 f.

[36] For a pertinent account of the distinctive narrative traits that define the 'hard-boiled' genre, see Simpson, *Detective Fiction from Latin America*, 9-24.

[37] See Bolaño, 2666, 475-477.

[38] See Jacques Lacan, *Le séminaire*, Bd. 11: Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse. In

a similar perspective, Vittoria Borsò underscores the “effects of presence” which are contingent upon the verbal intensity of the narrative descriptions and represent the immediate textual articulation or transmission of traces of physical violence; see “Zur ‘Ontologie der Literatur’: Präsenz von Lebens-Zeichen in Zeiten der technischen Reproduzierbarkeit von Gewalt.”

[39] Bolaño, *2666*, 328.

[40] For an instructive analysis of the complex relationship that is established in *Estrella distante* between Carlos Wieder’s art and artistic practices belonging to the European and Chilean (Neo-)avant-garde and for an inspiring interpretation of Wieder’s photographs as ambivalent realizations of an ‘abject’ or infamous poetics, see Silvana Mandolessi, “El arte según Wieder: estética y política de lo abyecto en *Estrella distante*”.

[41] See Giorgio Agamben, *Homo sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. For an analysis of the representation of violence in Bolaño’s *2666* formulated on the basis of Giorgio Agamben’s biopolitical theory of sovereignty, see Borsò, “Zur ‘Ontologie der Literatur’”. For a complementary interpretation of the dead bodies of the murdered women as representatives of “bare life”, see Driver, “Más o menos muerto: Bare Life in Roberto Bolaño’s *2666*”.

[42] See the concise observations in Mandolessi, “El arte según Wieder”.

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