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Degeneration of Society as an Apocalyptic Symptom: Gender-Driven Crime and Violence in Roberto Bolaño's *2666*

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Abstract

Roberto Bolaño's five-part novel 2666 is an exploration of the degeneration of the world as seen in the events happening in Santa Teresa, where poor and marginalized women are murdered with no justice in sight. This study focuses on the fourth part of the novel, "The Part About the Crimes", where the manifold murders and the women victims' lives unfold while those in power ignore the crisis in town. This paper uses textual analyses and employs Foucault's approach to power, the feminist views to the Foucauldian approach, and the feminist approach to femicide to elucidate the notions of power explored in the novel, especially in relation to gender power imbalance and destabilization. Through the analysis it was found that the changing power dynamics in a largely patriarchal society and the subversion of accepted gender norms contributed to the rise of femicides in Santa Teresa. The highly unequal society portrayed by Bolaño in his novel serves to reflect modern Latin American society and its perceived chaos, where violence against women have become the norm. The novel's lack of resolution implies that the world is still very much in that chaos, degeneration continuing to happen, serving as an apocalyptic symptom that signals that the end is coming ever nearer to humanity, an end that is man's own doing.

Keywords: *apocalyptic literature; Roberto Bolaño; 2666; Latin American literature*

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Introduction

In the novel *2666*, Roberto Bolaño writes, "Only in chaos are we conceivable" (2004/2008, p. 736). *2666* is a dense, multilayered novel exploring the degeneration of the world as seen in the events happening in Santa Teresa, a border town where poor and marginalized women are murdered, the perpetrator, or perpetrators, unknown. It's implied that the crimes are the work of more than just one man, but of several people who

are in power. Chaos reigns in this highly unequal society, where rich men loom over the powerless, especially the women who are forced to work menial jobs in a place where justice is something akin to a dream.

Chaos is defined as anything that moves the universe back towards an undifferentiated state, likened to that of prior to creation (Finamore, 2009). In much of literature, total chaos can be preemptive of a cataclysmic event, such as an apocalypse. In real life, chaos is spread through fear of the unknown, such as panic buying prior to the arrival of a storm. Chaos is also spread through anger, such as an outbreak of violence due to a triggering event involving injustice towards a marginalized people. From 2020 to 2021, as the COVID 19 pandemic raged on across the world, chaos surfaced in many instances, spread by misinformation and lack of information. In today's world, where progress and technology govern life, including war and conflict, it can be said that the world constantly sees chaos in one form or another.

Plenty of apocalyptic narratives point toward chaos as a sign that the world is ending, with death and sickness taken as omens of impending doom. The word apocalypse comes from the word *apokálupsis*, which means "revelation" or "unfolding" (Lewis, 2004). With this definition in mind, an apocalypse is commonly associated with The Revelation of John, the final book in the Bible, which narrates the eventual doom of humankind in a final battle between good and evil. The novel *2666* subverts this, hinting at a "secret" which lies at the heart of the killings, but it is never revealed.

In literature, apocalyptic or post-apocalyptic themes are prevalent in the genres of science fiction, horror, fantasy, or dystopia, and involves the collapse of civilization in the face of a cataclysmic event, such as a nuclear bomb, impact event, climate deterioration, or pandemic. None of these things are present in Roberto Bolaño's *2666*. In the novel, there is no impending event to fear, and perhaps it would have been easier had there been one. Instead, the novel offers a constant flow of horrifying reality, one that is perhaps more frightening than any disaster.

2666 was written by Bolaño towards the end of his life, when he was battling liver disease and was waiting for a transplant (Tayler, 2009). Some would say that this fact may have contributed to his apocalyptic views of daily reality. The novel was meant to be published in five installments, in five books, an arrangement that he sought in order to ensure that the family he was leaving behind would be well provided for. However, his literary executor and heirs, in "respect for the literary value of the work" published the novel in full in a single volume in 2004, a year after his death. The first English translation by Natasha Wimmer appeared in 2008. Since then, the book has been widely lauded for its sprawling narrative style and complex themes.

Much of the book deals with social degeneration in different aspects of life. The five sections, or books, intersect with each other in certain respects. At the heart of the novel is the rampant killings of women in the city of Santa Teresa in Mexico, which borders the United States. The first section, or "book", "The Part about the Critics", is a glimpse into the world of academia, a world that is separate from reality with its out-of-touch sensibilities. It involves four academics and their search for an obscure German author, whose works they have dedicated their entire research careers to. The second book, "The Part about Amaltifano", is about the Philosophy professor Óscar Amaltifano, who moves to Santa Teresa from Chile with his teenage daughter, Rosa. He worries that his daughter will become a victim of the female murders happening in the city. Later on, he eventually succumbs to mental illness. The third book, "The Part about Fate", is about the journalist Oscar Fate and his bid to tell the story of the femicides, leading him to interview the main suspect, Klaus Haas. The fourth book, "The Part about the Crimes", is the narrative of the many crimes targeted at women in the city of Santa Teresa. It is the main focus of this study. Finally, the fifth book, "The Part about Archimboldi", is about the life of the German author Benno von Archimboldi, whose real name is Hans Reiter. It tells about his past during the Second World War as a soldier on the Easter Front, and beyond. The novel ends with the revelation that Reiter is the uncle of Klaus Haas. Throughout the novel, many themes related to degeneration are

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touched upon: the collapse of relationships, mental stability, careers, society, and even the instability of such ordered sections of civilization, such as the police force and journalism. No cataclysm is mentioned, but the novel thrives on an atmosphere of tension, and there's a hint that there's something bad happening, something worse than the killings.

Apocalypse is even directly hinted at in the book: "In another, he wonders what will be left when the universe dies and time and space die with it. Zero, nothing" (Bolaño, 2004/2008, p.736). Readers are left with no definite answers by the end of the book, but perhaps that was the intention all along: to end things by giving nothing. This study is an exploration of Bolaño's personal vision of the world in *2666*, a world where chaos is the symptom of a looming apocalypse.

The fourth part of *2666* focuses on a narration of crimes against women in Santa Teresa, told in an almost detached style reminiscent of the news or forensic reports. Several studies have analyzed the forensic approach that Bolaño adopted for this section of the book, which functions as the narrative of a world that is increasingly wearying and full of relentless crime. This study focuses on the fourth part of the book, "The Part About the Crimes", where much of the chaos in the novel is narrated. The fourth part is markedly different in style and content from the rest of the book due to its almost lack of story or focus, jumping from the description of one crime to another, and from character to character, effectively depicting the essence of a society where crime and violence are the norm. For this reason, the fourth part of the book fits the scope of this study, which is to explore the notion of a society on the verge of an apocalypse, as depicted in the novel.

Frantzen (2016), for example, points out how the forensic approach in the narrative, in terms of composition and style, blurs the boundaries between fact and fiction. The result goes beyond mere trauma and testimony, creating a projection of the political implications of the 21st century. Meanwhile, Scott (2018) refers to Bolaño's writing style in this chapter as "narrative necrosis", reminiscent of the process of decomposition that dead tissue undergoes. The narrative writing style is dead-like and serial, cataloguing one crime after another with little or no resolution, with several sections ending with the phrase "and the case was closed" despite not arriving at any conclusion or resolution, with the implication that the police gave up. Scott's (2018) argument is that such repetition is designed as a "structural correlative for the seriality of the actual murders" (p. 3) which alters the narrative quality of the novel, leading to a narrative necrosis that functions as the correlative for the bodies piling up in the course of the story. This is especially true since the next and final part of the novel refuses to provide any consolation or conclusion to the murders, and instead focuses on the life of Archimboldi. Ultimately, the novel ends with Archimboldi preparing to board a flight to Mexico, purportedly to visit his erstwhile nephew, the suspect of the Santa Teresa murders, who is not known to be responsible for any of the crimes at all. Brito (2018) also points out that the fourth book's idiosyncratic framing tells of the patriarchal gender system, set in a world where the women characters are innately aware that their place in society is lower because of their gender. He further posits that once the crimes are discovered, with plenty of details to horrify the reader, the approaches the characters come up with to solve or escape the crimes fade away beyond the page. As such, the novel's focus is not on the violence but rather in how the characters react or engage to it subjectively. Brito highlights three female characters from the book and analyzes how they can't unite to challenge the hell ruling over Santa Teresa, but the fragments of their stories narrate a glimpse into innate strength and dignity, the only weapon they can wield against a society that almost excludes them.

This paper looks into the forensic narrative of the fourth book and how it functions as a doomsday message full of chaos and ruin, set in contemporary reality. The narrative tension, a trademark of Bolaño fiction, serves to portray chaos as a precursor to complete devastation. The experiences of the characters in the book are at the core of this tension, which ultimately leads them to make difficult choices on how to react to the killings and how to structure their lives around

the chaos. Much of the study on Bolaño's work focuses on his grandiose literary style that is quite unlike any of the Latin American greats. His fiction does not possess the magical realist style so known throughout the region. Instead, his works portray the grittier side of Latin American society, conjuring characters that are unpredictable, a testament to the author's bohemian intellectual life. Many studies focus on the author's stylistic aplomb, but not much focus is given on his social realism, especially in his portrayal of the tragic realism at the heart of Latin American society.

Gentic (2015) pointed out that Bolaño employs a modified type of realism derived from the "reality effect" of Roland Barthes and Jacques Rancière's theory on the democratization of the reading process. In effect, Bolaño mimicked Latin American politics, situating it in the realist style. This goes back the notion put forward by another Latin American author, Mario Vargas Llosa (1978), who said that writers from the region have a social responsibility that they cannot escape from.

Similarly, Deckard (2012), posits that Bolaño reformulated realism to explore the ideologies of art while dealing with the limits of realism, especially in his portrayal of millennial capitalism. Bolaño's *2666* continues his social realist style through the portrayal of marginalized classes, in particular, the women laborers who are murdered and forgotten, powerless in a world made by powerful men.

Reinares (2010) points out that the novel combines patriarchy with class and race, so that an invisible barrier is clearly delineated between the ones preyed upon and those who are untouchable. The seemingly emotionless portrayal of the women and their deaths is a constant reminder that their poverty is a crucial element to their violent demise. Despite the rampant female exploitation present in the maquiladoras, and despite the dangers posed towards women who go out at night on their own, the women still persist to go and do their job, portraying an unending cycle rooted in patriarchy and class struggle in a society where only those in power can live is safety and comfort.

Meanwhile, Mathew (2016) explored the image of Mexico portrayed in *2666*, a Mexico of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries that became a violent cradle of modernity. It is a reality that arose out of economic and political structures, among others, rooted in a corrupt power system designed to exploit the poor, especially poor women. In the novel, the murders of women have become so frequent that they have become banal. The dismissive attitude is propagated in society through a host of global factors that conspire to create an entire community complicit to gender-based violence.

Brito (2018) focused on this oppressive structure, theorizing that the power dynamics in Santa Teresa are effectively captured not by portraying those in power but by giving a voice to the individuals who are alienated from such power. In particular, the women in the novel are the farthest away from power, fighting a war against gendered violence and patriarchal power, while having to shoulder the burden of all the murdered women who will never be avenged. By giving voice to these women, Bolaño stays true to the Latin American notion of the writer's social responsibility. Baker (2020), in particular, theorizes that *2666* is Bolaño's denunciation of the gendered violence associated with Mexican society, which has long reinforced systemic violence in the face of its established power systems.

All of these related studies explore the notion of power and gender and how they are embedded in Latin American society, dictating much of the social structure and leading to rampant corruption and violence which create an atmosphere of chaos and complicity. This study aims to contribute to the growing body of knowledge focusing on Bolaño's unique approach to social realism, which focuses on giving a voice to those who are marginalized in Latin American society, especially the women and the poor who are alienated from power.

Methodology

This study uses the fourth part of Roberto Bolaño's novel *2666*, "The Part About the Crimes", as its source. The method of study is textual analyses using Foucault's theory of power, especially subjection, discipline and

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justice, the various feminist views on Foucault's approach, and the feminist approach to femicide.

This paper aims to elucidate how the power dynamics in society contributed to the degeneration of one city, the symbol of a world that has gone wrong and is increasingly headed towards catastrophe. The feminist approach to femicide also underpins this study to look at issues of misogyny and patriarchy and how they contributed to the cases of femicide and the characters' attitudes towards them. The feminist approach confronts dominant patriarchal ideology while investigating the nature of the killings of women. This paper looks into the gender relations in the novel and how they reveal an imbalance that has given rise to a generally accepted culture of violence against women, ultimately resulting to femicide.

In *Discipline and Punish* (1975/1977), Foucault argues that society has reconfigured its ways of punishment and surveillance to more humane approaches, ultimately creating not only the modern prison but also schools, factories, and workhouses. This has led to the creation of a more obedient population that has accepted the structure of society, along with its values and beliefs. Under the prison-like model of modern society, people seek to fit in as if they are being constantly watched, so that they accept the realities propagated by the wider society. However, Foucault also emphasizes that if there's power, there are also "sites of resistance" that offer a glimpse into the reconfiguration of power relations to address widespread oppression. Apart from disciplinary power, Foucault also describes sovereign power, a pyramid-like power structure with a group or a person at the very top holding power, while "normal" or oppressed people are located below. A group propagating the orders from the top occupy the middle. This structure is akin to that of an absolute monarchy (Lynch, 2011). Taylor (2011) further demonstrates that the sovereign power has the right to take or subtract from the oppressed, such as taking a life, but not to control life, which is present in disciplinary power.

These approaches provide an avenue to analyze the chosen part of the novel in terms of its portrayal of power and its implications on gendered violence and the exploitation of marginalized classes, especially women. The apocalyptic element in the novel is underpinned by the rampant violence and crimes against women, and this study explores the notion that existing power structures have served to encourage such systemic violence and the attitudes of people towards issues related to it.

Results and Discussion

A patriarchal society is one in which oppressive attitudes towards women are culturally sanctioned and integrated and expressed throughout all of society's institutions (Jasinski & Taylor, 2011). Corradi et al. (2016) traced the primary tenet of any patriarchy in power, specifically in an unequal power distribution between men and women, which gives rise to the use of violence as a means to control women. The number of violent murders of women led to the creation of the word "femicide", which is distinct to the gender-neutral "homicide". It was first used by Diana Russell in 1976 to raise awareness on the violent deaths of women, and how these killings were specifically carried out because of gender-related issues. The more general phenomenon of violence against women is also linked to issues of unequal power distribution (Hester et al., 1995).

Santa Teresa in *2666* is without a doubt a patriarchal society. In it, men are still very much in control of the world, but the women are also able to take charge of their own lives, including their sexuality. This emerging power and freedom that women enjoy threatens to change the power dynamics in society, leading to widespread violence and crimes against women. The patriarchal structure in society is clearly illustrated in the way the crimes against the poor women are treated. They are largely dismissed or ignored, left as cold cases. Moreover, not much thought is given to the crimes at the beginning, as they are not treated as a serious issue. In one instance, the crimes of a man dubbed as the "Demon Penitent", a church desecrator, are given more coverage in

the media, due to his targeting of churches and priests.

As in many Latin American countries, it is implied that Santa Teresa has a network of cartels operated by kingpins, politicians, and the police, all of whom are men who are in positions of power. The poor, especially the women, are completely at their mercy, so much so that these groups of men are able to direct the course of investigations at a moment's notice. They are able to stop probes into certain cases, for example, to avoid getting the truth about the murders out.

Among feminist scholars, the works of Michel Foucault have been very influential. This is in spite of the fact that Foucault has never really discussed the relationship between gender and power, even after his explorations on power, sexuality, discipline, and subjectivity. There is no acknowledgment as to how gender dictates discipline on the body, for example. Nevertheless, scholars such as Angela King (2004) posit that gender, especially femininity, affects the notion of discipline as outlined by Foucault, producing bodies and identities and operating as a type of social control.

In *2666*, it is implied that the killings of women in the city are related to the idea of control, especially with regard to the control of women and how they live their lives. Most of the women who are murdered in the story belong to the working class, with a few exceptions. They drop out of school and work in maquiladoras, the foreign-owned factories that are notoriously exploitative. As workers in these factories, the women subvert the docile image that society has of them, using their bodies not for domestic activities but for livelihood, effectively demoting the role of the male in the household. They do not possess the traditional notion of femininity, the type of discipline subscribed to women, by performing tasks that are particularly unfeminine.

Drawing from Foucault's notion of power and discipline, Bartky (1990) expounds that disciplinary practices are gendered so that women's bodies are rendered more docile than their male counterparts. As such, women become aware of surveillance, as in the Panopticon model described by Foucault, but they employ a self-surveillance that is a form of obedience to patriarchy. Once this self-surveillance breaks down, and women no longer feel beholden to the surveillance and discipline that they are subjected to based on their gender, the power relations also break down, especially the established patriarchal order, giving way to the chaos described in the novel.

The patriarchal order subsists by ignoring the mounting cases of femicide, or by directly participating in the crimes, as implied in some instances. Some of the victims are migrants moving to the city or continuing on beyond the border to the United States. Several work as prostitutes or dancers, while others are waitresses and salesladies. All of these women, who died violently, are virtually ignored by the police. When the case starts out with a woman being missing, families have to persist in visiting the police station before the authorities deign to have any interest. In many instances, family members are the ones doing the searching, even if it is in vain. Eventually, the bodies are found dumped in vacant lots, parks, alleys, garbage dumps, drainage pipes, and construction sites. Some of the cases are similar to each other and can be the work of a serial killer, but the police force in Santa Teresa insists that there is no such thing in the city.

It is widely known that Bolaño based the femicides in the real-life killings of women that happened in Ciudad Juárez in Mexico, which started in 1993. The Chilean author had never been to Juárez, but he corresponded with the Mexican journalist Sergio González Rodríguez, best known for his reportage of the crimes (Gras & Meyer-Krentler, 2010). In total, there are 109 murders in *2666*, 98 of which are unsolved, or 90 percent of the cases. Following an analysis between *2666* and Rodríguez's essay "Huesos en el desierto" ("Bones in the Desert"), which tallies the number of women murders in Ciudad Juárez between 1995-1998, Andrews (2014) concludes that 73 of the murders described in the novel correspond to the real murder cases in the Mexican city. This information further proves that Bolaño wanted to mirror the truth closely in order to

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depict the madness of the world as seen in a city that, for many years, refused to acknowledge that it had a case of femicides.

In the novel, several of the women are murdered by the men in their lives because of their perceived independence. Gabriela Morón, an 18-year-old young woman, was shot by her boyfriend because she refused to go to the United States with him. It was said that she was comfortable staying in the city because she had a good job. Perhaps in a telling scene, when asked if one victim had a boyfriend, a friend said, "What do we need men for when we have our own jobs and make money and can do what we want?" (Bolaño, 2004/2008, p. 468). Control is also present in the ways that the women are violated, tortured, and killed. Many are found to be anally and vaginally raped and killed by strangulation or multiple stabbing. Victims whose suspects are apprehended are found to be killed because of jealousy.

The notion of the imbalance of gender relations in the city is perhaps best encapsulated by the discussion of fears and phobias between Elvira Campos, an asylum director, and Inspector Juan de Dios Martínez. Campos describes gynophobia as the fear of women, which she says naturally only inflicts men and is common in Mexico. When Martínez protests, Campos insists: "Almost all Mexican men are afraid of women" (Bolaño, 2004/2008, p. 382). Campos then goes on to list more phobias, until Martínez interjects that some Mexican men may be afraid of women, but surely not all of them as it can't be that bad. In the novel, the fear of women is prevalent in a society where the men are in power, and so control in the form of violence becomes the norm.

In an analysis of the femicides in Ciudad Juárez, Livingston (2004) observes that women who seek employment and leave the home, especially to work in the many maquiladoras in the city, threaten to destabilize gender roles. In the novel, many of the women victims have left the home and are largely independent, no longer relying on a male in the household to provide for the family. In some cases, they are not even interested in dating or settling down. As such, the role of the male is not as clearly delineated, leading to a power destabilization between genders. As such, the gender-driven violence in the city may be a negative reaction to the fact that women have been attaining independence and personal autonomy, while men seem to be losing ground.

Pantaleo (2010) specifically identifies sociocultural attitudes towards gender roles as an influential factor in the nature of the crimes in Juárez. She classifies that in patriarchal Mexico, two expressions of gender status have been maintained in society: machismo, characterized by male aggression and power, and marianismo, characterized by domestic duties and subordination. Furthermore, the changes in gender roles may be seen as a threat to Mexico's culture of hypermasculinity (Olivera, 2006). In the novel, the men very much still subscribe to the machismo gender expression, characterized by displays of power in the form of guns, cars, and wealth. Meanwhile, the traditional notion of marianismo is not as practiced among the women, who are slowly gaining independence outside the home by occupying jobs that are traditionally assigned to men, such as in factories or politics. Moreover, they are not as subordinate and are able to speak their minds and control their own sexuality. This leads to an imbalance between the two genders and their associated expressions.

The novel further illustrates the notion of patriarchal power in the character of Klaus Haas, a German-born US citizen who becomes the main suspect in the killings owing to his connection to one of the victims, who was a customer in his computer shop. Despite the killings continuing on while Haas is incarcerated, the police believe that he is the murderer and all other crimes after his arrest were "minor". Over time, Haas develops connections within the prison and is able to have a degree of freedom, such as having a cell phone. He also conducts press conferences, and it was during one of these that he revealed his discovery that the cousins Antonio and Daniel Uribe, sons of rich men, are responsible for the killings. They are also said to be proteges of a *narco*, or drug lord, and are friends with sons of millionaires, *narcos,* and cops. These young men prowl the city, spend

money, and kill, according to Haas. It is never revealed if this particular information is true. Meanwhile, Haas is rumored to have a connection with a *narco* himself, which is what may have afforded him his privileges in jail. It is also hinted in the novel that a meeting between a group of powerful men and the police was convened to discuss the killings in the city, including how to deal with them while avoiding chaos and panic.

Another illustration of patriarchal power is seen in the characterizations of the sons of the elite. In the novel, the victims of the femicide range from the ages of 10 to 50. The kidnappings of children are another issue that may be the work of a group. In several instances, the victims are seen to approach a black Peregrino, which is later revealed to be a favored car model among the rich. At one point, the police are ordered to stop the investigations on the car model, since almost the entire fleet of Peregrino's in the city are owned by the sons of the city's elite.

Drug cartels are known to operate in Ciudad Juárez, and many instances of violence against women are commonly attributed to them, including a number of the murders. Furthermore, Olivera (2006) states that gang activities are highly influenced by misogyny. In *2666*, it has been hinted several times that organized crime may have a hand in the killings.

These illustrations of power wielded by men, specifically rich and influential men, emphasize the power relations in Santa Teresa. The city functions within the bounds of sovereign power, where the rich, including crime bosses, rule over everyone, while corrupt cops and officials guard their secrets. Meanwhile, the everyday man and woman are at the bottom of the hierarchy, with the implication that women are placed further down, given how society treats them. Disciplinary power is also present in the city, in the form of the prison-like systems of the maquiladoras, which are the source of livelihood for many in the city. The lower classes believe that they must work and accept the realities of their hardships, an endless cycle perpetuated for generations. They are also accepting of the corruption prevalent in society, such as in the police force, for it has been the way of things. Regarding the killings, it's implied that the mothers are afraid, along with some of the fathers, but people in general are not. For many in the city, life goes on.

The Foucauldian insight into the nature of subjection is useful in this regard. For Foucault, becoming a subject means being subjected to power relations at the same time. Butler (1993) draws on this to call for a subversive performance of the norms of gender that govern gender identity production. Butler further illustrates that Foucault's power as subjection determines which bodies matter, and ultimately which lives matter and which deaths can be grieved. In *2666*, the lives of the many women who are murdered are not mourned by the people but are only remembered by a few, especially by their families, before they become just another number, their cases neglected and ultimately forgotten.

Subjection in relation to gender is illustrated by Congresswoman Azucena Esquivel Plata, a powerful woman in the novel. She hires an investigator to find her Mexican-American best friend, Kelly Rivera Parker, who has disappeared and has likely fallen victim to the femicides in the city. Despite being a powerful woman, the congresswoman is unable to mount a public display of support for the campaign against the killings. Instead, she has the search conducted quietly, hiding behind the men she tasks with the investigation. She declares that she can't tell the authorities because they will perceive her to be crazy, and she can't tell the US police, either, out of patriotism for Mexico. Such powerlessness in a powerful woman encapsulates the imbalance of gender relations in the city, with the implication that she is only a woman after all and is subjected to the constraints of her gender in a world that is still run by men.

The crimes against women are given little to no attention by the police and the papers. More attention is given to the crimes of a man called "the Penitent". He is a sacraphobe, as labelled by the psychologist Elvira Campos, or someone with a fear of holy objects. He wrecks church properties and urinates all over the

floor. In one scene, a newspaper reporter from Mexico City is sent to write about the Penitent, and only then does he discover that there are femicides in the city. When he later asks the opinion of others about the case, they dismissively say that the cases are simply related to the cartel, as all things are in Santa Teresa.

Power in relation to justice is another issue explored in the novel. For Foucault, power structures and the subjugation of institutions influence justice, embodying systems of class oppression. In the novel, only a few of the women victims attain justice. One of these is Linda Vàzquez, who comes from a rich family. The teenage Vázquez is beaten and then stabbed to death by her boyfriend and his friends, who are part of a local gang. While in prison, the gang members are mutilated to death by inmates because they had "killed the daughter of a man with money" (Bolaño, 2004/2008, p. 521). The implication is that the father paid for the torture and murder of the suspects. In Santa Teresa, it seems that only the rich are able to take advantage of the justice system, albeit in a violent form, and this is especially possible if one is a man.

Due to the destabilization of power and gender roles in Santa Teresa, there is widespread chaos in the form of violence and crimes against women, contributing to the apocalyptic atmosphere in the novel. Regarding the novel's doomsday elements, Rohter (2005) points out that the title has a particularly apocalyptic quality. It is also thought to be a Biblical reference, referring to the Exodus, which began 2,666 years after Earth's creation (Hitchings, 2008). Ironically, the number *2666* never makes an appearance in the novel, but it does appear in the author's short novel Amulet and in his other famous work The Savage Detectives. In Amulet, the number is used to describe a road that looks like "a cemetery in the year *2666*", while in The Savage Detectives, it's used in a cryptic line referring to "days to come" (Mishan, 2009). As such, the title of the novel itself can be thought to be the author's grim prediction of the year when the world will come to an end. In Santa Teresa, the manifold crimes and violence are the mere precursors to that end. Something horrible, unknown, and unnamable is happening, the violence ignored by those in power and the deaths of the innocent rendered inconsequential. The complicity and corruption prevalent in the city are best encapsulated by the line: "No one pays attention to these killings, but the secret of the world is hidden in them" (Bolaño, 2004/2008, p. 349). The "secret" here is never revealed, but one interpretation could be that the world is governed by the corruption at the heart of man, creating chaos, and it is that very same corruption that will spell doom for mankind.

The breakdown of power and gender relations directly correlates to the apocalyptic element in the novel, as seen in the tension in the narrative. Bolaño is known for employing narrative tension in his works. In *2666*, he heightens and sustains the tension by means of fragmentation and alternation, decentralizing it and relying on the brief stories of marginal characters rather that posing an overarching question and finding an answer (Andrews, 2014). The result is a narrative that can leave the reader breathless as each case is described in gory detail and then set aside. The dizzying number of bodies piling up can also lead to a feeling of weariness. Andrews further discusses that "The Part About the Crimes" is not a mystery, since 90 percent of the cases are left unsolved, and the murderers are not among the characters whose stories intertwine in the novel. Instead, Andrews (2014) posits that Bolaño has left the perpetrators out to "concentrate instead on surveying the damage done" (p. 85). This narrative style effectively captures the chaos in Santa Teresa, which embodies the slow degeneration of society.

The chaos is within the hearts and minds of the people as well, especially among the women. In one scene, a 28-year-old teacher, Perla Beatriz Ochoterena, is revealed to have committed suicide due to the tension she feels, caused by the rising number of femicide cases. In the letter she leaves behind, she says: "all those dead girls" and then: "I can't take it anymore. I try to make a life for myself, like everyone, but how?" (Bolaño, 2004/2008, p. 517).

After seeing a demonstration by the feminist group Women in Action (WA) on television, Elvira Campos suspects that the whole of Mexico has gone crazy, leading her to think that perhaps it was best to leave the country. On a fatalistic note, she reflects on whether she should just kill herself before aging any further, after seeing an old colleague among the WA protesters. Later on, she confesses to Martínez that she sometimes dreams of giving everything up, selling everything, and moving to Paris, going further as to how she will reinvent her entire identity via plastic surgery. Martínez, for his part, finds himself breaking down at times as a result of the trauma derived from his exposure to the cases, but he ultimately finds himself unable to produce tears. This is especially notable since Martínez is very much a part of the corrupt and patriarchal system, exhibiting misogynistic qualities, yet even he finds the situation unbearable.

These glimpses into the psyche of a few characters reveal the tension caused by the chaos broiling beneath the surface in Santa Teresa. Women are dying everywhere, but only a few care and even then they struggle to have their voices heard. There's something evil governing the city, but many are complicit to that evil, and so life goes on. Klaus Haas hints at a "giant" that will come and save him from his plight. This is implied to be his uncle, Archimboldi. However, it can also be interpreted as a great evil coming to the city. It is an evil that is already perceived to be rotting away at the core of society, but something even greater is on its way.

Conclusion

In Bolaño's universe, Santa Teresa is a stand-in for the very real place that is Ciudad Juárez in northern Mexico, notorious for its female homicides. In *2666*, as in real life, the violence is ignored by those in power and the deaths of the innocent are rendered inconsequential. The textual analyses of "The Part About the Crimes" using Foucault's approach to power reveals the novel's complex exploration of Latin American society in relation to subjection, discipline, and justice. While the Foucauldian approach has been largely gender-neutral, many feminists have used Foucault's theories to explore the notion of how gender governs discipline and subjection. In the novel, this is illustrated by the women characters and how their subversion of discipline and subjection has led to a gender power imbalance that resulted in widespread femicides. This destabilization of gender roles contributes to the chaos in society that then becomes an apocalyptic symptom, where crime becomes banal. The power structure present in Santa Teresa has contributed to the people's way of life. As a result, they have become more accepting of the realities of work, crime, and corruption circulating in their community, while bowing down in fear and weary surrender before those in power. Meanwhile, women are perceived to be at the bottom in society, and their personal autonomy is controlled and assailed at every turn with violence as a means of control. Something horrible, unknown, and unnamable is happening. The novel explores the notion that the contemporary times and their manifold crimes and violence are the mere precursors to the coming end. The novel's lack of resolution implies that the world is still very much in that chaos, degeneration continuing to happen, the end coming ever nearer to humanity.

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