

Epigraph: “*An oasis of horror in a desert of boredom.*—Charles Baudelaire.” Bolaño rarely wrote about the liver condition that was the cause of his death, but in a lecture called “Literature + Illness = Illness” (dedicated to “my friend, Doctor Víctor Vargas, hepatologist”) he speaks directly and movingly about what it’s like to know that death may be near. Of the line from Baudelaire’s poem “Le Voyage” that became the epigraph of 2666, he writes: “And this is really more than enough. In the middle of a desert of boredom, an oasis of horror. There is no more lucid diagnosis for **the illness of modern man**. To escape boredom, to escape deadlock, all we have at hand, though not so close at hand, because even here an effort is required, is horror, or in other words, evil.”

p. 9: “*Then Pelletier could think back on the day when he first read Archimboldi, and he saw himself, young and poor, living in a chambre de bonne*”: Proposition: Part I of 2666 as satirical sequel to *The Savage Detectives*. The visceral realists, young idealists, have grown up to become professors of literature, still seekers but no longer idealistic, writing scholarly papers instead of poetry and feuding with academic rivals instead of opposing schools of poets. (See notes to pp. 9, 64 p. 683, 151, 226, 622, and 760 for other more or less direct links to *The Savage Detectives*.)

What may strike readers first, however, is how different 2666 is from *The Savage Detectives*. Rodrigo Fresán, novelist, critic, and friend of Bolaño explains the relationship this way: “**2666 is the twin sister**—different but complementary—of *The Savage Detectives*.”

p. 9: “*He saw himself, as we’ve said*”: Who is this shadowy “we,” and does 2666 have a true first-person narrator? If so, he (or she, or they) is elusive, making only occasional appearances in an otherwise omniscient third person narrative. Ignacio Echevarría, Bolaño’s friend and literary executor, offers a clue. In a note found after the writer’s death, Bolaño wrote: “**The narrator of 2666 is Arturo Belano**.” If this is true, and not a posthumous practical joke\*, it is not borne out

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\* Rodrigo Fresán tells the following story about Bolaño the practical joker: “I remember that afternoon: we left Kentucky Fried Chicken and Bolaño went down the stairs to the platform of his commuter train and I went back home and half an hour later Bolaño rang my doorbell, again. He

by anything so obvious as a cameo appearance by Belano, the protagonist of *The Savage Detectives* (though see note to p. 760). Instead, it would seem to suggest that the novel be read as a product of the mind of Arturo Belano.

Note that the narrator of the central section of *The Savage Detectives* is also an unidentified figure, a faceless interviewer whose presence is only hinted at by the tone of the many characters who testify to their involvement with Arturo Belano and Ulises Lima.

p. 12: “*Later he would discover the work of a modern author, Jünger*”: Ernst Jünger (1895–1998), German writer and thinker, author of the World War I memoir *Storm of Steel* and controversial exponent of what has been called **the “fascist unconscious”** (by scholar Klaus Theweleit, not Bolaño, though the phrase would serve as a decent subtitle for *Nazi Literature in the Americas*). Jünger is a minor character in *By Night in Chile*, where he carries on a conversation with a Chilean diplomat about “the human and the divine, war and peace, Italian painting and Nordic painting, the source of evil and the effects of evil that sometimes seem to be triggered by chance, the flora and fauna of Chile.”

p. 29: “*strangely, the Swabian remembered Archimboldi’s jacket more clearly than the novel crammed into its pocket...a black leather coat with a high collar*”: The black leather jacket as fetish object, as well as a link between the Archimboldi glimpsed in Part I and the

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was soaked by the storm and wild-eyed and shaking as if barely withstanding a private earthquake. “I’ve killed a man,” he announced in a deathly voice; and he came into my apartment, headed for the living room and asked me to make him a cup of tea. Then he told me that as he was waiting on the platform, a couple of skinheads had come up to him and tried to rob him, that there was a scuffle, that he managed to get a knife away from one of them and stab the other one near the heart, that then he ran away down corridors and streets, and that he didn’t know what to do next. “What should I do? Should I turn myself in?” I said he shouldn’t. Bolaño looked at me with infinite sadness and said that he couldn’t keep writing with a death on his conscience, that he wouldn’t be able to look his son in the eyes anymore, something like that. Moved, I said that I understood and I’d go with him to the police station; to which he responded, indignant: “What? You’d turn me in just like that? Without mercy? An Argentinian writer betraying a Chilean writer? Shame on you!” Then Bolaño must have seen my desperation: because he gave one of those little cracked laughs of his and, fascinated, said over and over again “But you know I couldn’t kill a mosquito...How could you believe a story like that?” (“The Savage Detective”, *The Believer*)

Archiboldi of Part V. See also:  
<http://us.macmillan.com/author/robertobolano>

p.45: “*And speaking of the Greeks, it would be fair to say that Espinoza and Pelletier believed themselves to be (and in their perverse way, were) incarnations of Ulysses*”: In an essay on Bolaño titled “La batalla futura,” the Mexican novelist and critic Juan Villoro (see note to p. 257) suggests that the characters of *2666* can be seen as “individuals removed from the vacillations of the inner life who, like **Greek heroes**, advance toward their destiny with their eyes wide open.” This sets them in sharp contrast to the characters of *The Savage Detectives*, who endlessly plumb their inner lives. Classical mythology is a touchstone for Bolaño in *2666*, and allusions (often eccentric) to the Greeks proliferate. Perhaps the most bizarre is the suggestion—mocked by Amalfitano in Part II—that there is a direct kinship between the ancient Greeks and the Araucanian Indians of Chile. In Part III, Professor Kessler, overheard by Fate in a roadside diner, declares that the Greeks invented evil. And then there is Archiboldi’s dreamlike encounter with a statue of what he believes to be a Greek goddess during the battle for the capture of Chornomorske.

p. 151: “*Pelletier, Espinoza, and Norton traveled from Paris to Mexico City*”: In *The Savage Detectives*, Belano and Lima travel from the New World to the Old World in the time-honored fashion of Latin American writers. In *2666*, the travels of Bolaño’s protagonists are reversed. Three European academics make their way to Santa Teresa, and the novel ends with Archiboldi leaving for the same place (“Soon afterward he left the park and the next morning he was on his way to Mexico”). Critic J.A. Masóliiver Ródenas, in *La Vanguardia*, on Bolaño’s vision of **the sinister conjunction of Old World and New**: “Thus we’ve come, circle after circle, to a human hell in which the fate of Europe and Latin America are masterfully joined.”

p. 226: “*It was Lola, Rosa’s mother*”: Bolaño reserved his most unvarnished confessional and autobiographical material for his poems. In several poems from the massive posthumous volume *La universidad desconocida*, Bolaño makes reference to **a girlfriend named Lola** (“In the winter of ’78, in Barcelona, when I still lived with Lola!”), including enough detail to link her to the unstable Andalusian girlfriend

described in the section of *The Savage Detectives* narrated by female bodybuilder María Teresa Solsona Ribot.

p. 226: “*Lola’s pretext was a plan to visit her favorite poet, who lived in the insane asylum in Mondragón, near San Sebastián*”: The object of Lola’s obsession bears a pronounced resemblance to the **Spanish poet Leopoldo María Panero** (b. 1948), author of a collection titled *Poems from the Mondragón Mental Hospital* (among many other books), and a mental patient since the 1970s. (See also the sketch of Pelayo Barrendoain in *The Savage Detectives*.) In the introduction to a 2005 interview with Panero, Francisco Véjar notes that many believe Panero to be Spain’s greatest living poet, and that he is difficult to interview because he’s so heavily sedated. Véjar also informs the reader that Panero claims to be the reincarnation of Baudelaire. See also a four-minute YouTube clip of Panero strolling through the woods (the grounds of the Mondragón asylum?) to the strains of *Greensleeves*, interspersed with footage from *Frankenstein: Panero clip*.

p. 257: “*Pere Gimferrer, Rodrigo Rey Rosa, and Juan Villoro*”: All **friends of Bolaño**. Pere Gimferrer (b. 1945): Catalan poet and critic, wrote the introduction to the Spanish edition of *The Romantic Dogs*. Part of a generation of poets (along with Leopoldo María Panero) dubbed *Novísimos*, after the influential anthology *Nueve novísimos poetas españoles* (1970) [Nine Very New Spanish Poets]. Rodrigo Rey Rosa (b. 1958): Guatemalan novelist and short story writer. Traveled to Tangier at the age of 22 to study with Paul Bowles. (Eventually, each would translate the other.) Juan Villoro (b. 1956): Mexican novelist, prolific essayist, and journalist. Met Bolaño in 1975, during a prize-giving ceremony hosted by the magazine *Punto de partida*, at which Bolaño won a third prize for poetry. It was Villoro (along with Bolaño’s editor, Jorge Herralde) who convinced Bolaño to give up the title *Storms of Shit* in favor of *By Night in Chile*.

p. 312: “*He chose The Metamorphosis over The Trial, he chose Bartleby over Moby-Dick, he chose A Simple Heart over Bouvard et Pécuchet, and A Christmas Carol over A Tale of Two Cities or The Pickwick Papers. What a sad paradox, thought Amalfitano. Now even bookish pharmacists are afraid to take on the great,*

*imperfect, torrential works, books that blaze paths into the unknown.*” With 2666, Bolaño clearly chooses *Moby-Dick* over *Bartleby*. As Ignacio Echevarría points out in his “Note to the First Edition” of 2666, Bolaño “boasted...of having embarked on a colossal project, far surpassing *The Savage Detectives* in ambition and length.” In Fresán’s words: “What is sought and achieved here is **the Total Novel**, placing the author of 2666 on the same team as Cervantes, Sterne, Melville, Proust, Musil, and Pynchon.”

More on *Moby-Dick*, the quintessential Total American Novel, from Bolaño’s introduction to a Spanish edition of *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*: “[*Moby-Dick*] is the key to those territories that by convention or for convenience’s sake we’ll call the territories of evil, where man does battle with himself and with the unknown and generally is defeated in the end.” Among other Melvillean echoes in 2666 is the speech delivered by Barry Seaman in Part III, reminiscent of the sermon delivered at the beginning of *Moby-Dick* by another spiritual leader with a salty past.

p. 322: “*That’s what I like to hear, son,*” said the boss. “*Did you hear that Jimmy Lowell got whacked?*” Bolaño was a reader of Walter Mosley, Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, Jim Thompson, Thomas Harris, and Chester Himes. His taste for **pulp fiction** was complemented by his taste for B-movies. The following are a few of the items that appear on a list he compiled of random subjects he enjoyed discussing with Fresán, a similarly avid consumer of pop culture: Philip K. Dick, David Lynch (see note to p. 431), Kubrick, serial killers, the sexual habits of red-backed squirrel monkeys and ants and great whales. (Also included on the list: Borges, Gombrowicz, Proust, Wittgenstein.)

p. 334: “*Years ago he had published a book called Eating Ribs with Barry Seaman*”: One indication of many that Barry Seaman is modeled on **Bobby Seale**, founder with Huey Newton of the Black Panthers. In 1988, Seale published a barbecue cookbook titled *Barbeque’n with Bobby*. In the acknowledgments he thanks Jerry Rubin, “who was really the first to enthusiastically suggest that I write a cookbook. While we were both political prisoners in 1969 during the Great Chicago 8 Conspiracy Trial, I would go on and on, describing recipes detail by detail on how I

would prepare my favorite dishes.”  
<http://www.bobbyqueseale.com/>

p. 280: “*I have a movie on video by Robert Rodriguez,*” said Charly Cruz, “*a movie hardly anyone has ever seen.*” **Robert Rodriguez**: Mexican-American director who made his name with *El Mariachi*, filmed on a shoestring budget. Later frequently associated with Quentin Tarantino (*From Dawn Till Dusk*; *Grindhouse*). No movie like the video viewed in 2666 has been ascribed to him.

p. 431: “*This place is like hell,*” he said to Rosa Amalfitano.” Fate is referring to the Santa Teresa restaurant El Rey del Taco, one of the more overtly evil sites in 2666. Further on, an Argentinian journalist describes the “heaviness of a petrified nightmare” that hangs over the tables. There is plenty of explicit horror in 2666, but it might almost be seen as a distraction from **the presence of evil** in everyday things and actions, as in the films of David Lynch. Bolaño writes about seeing the world through such a lens in an essay about the London images of photographer Gilles Larraín: “Larraín photographs a queue: people waiting for the bus. This takes place in London but it might be said to happen on the fringes of hell. A perfectly orderly, perfectly normal queue.... From this point of view, London Bridge, with its doubledecker buses and its monstrous columns plunging into the dark, cold waters, takes on the guise of hell-bridge: a bridge along which the shadows of people slip and under which the water flows...with the majesty and sovereignty of death. I say *monstruous, hell, shadows, majesty, death*, but none of these words should be read with emphasis, but rather in a casual tone, as Larraín photographs them.”  
<http://www.gilleslarrain.com/>

p. 592: “*What are you doing, moon, up in the sky? asks the little shepherd in the poem. What are you doing, tell me, silent moon?*”: Here and over the next few pages, Florita quotes from (or paraphrases) **Leopardi’s “Night Song of a Wandering Shepherd in Asia.”** The version cited in the English edition of 2666 is by Jonathan Galassi, president and publisher of Farrar, Straus and Giroux. This turn of events might not have displeased Bolaño, whose affection for his Spanish publisher, Jorge Herralde of Anagrama, clearly informs his portrayal of Archiboldi’s publisher, Mr. Bubis

p. 598: “*It’s Santa Teresa! It’s Santa Teresa! I see it clearly now. Women are being killed there.*” Santa Teresa is a **barely disguised version of Ciudad Juárez**, transplanted from the state of Chihuahua to Sonora. In his depiction of the killings of women in Santa Teresa, Bolaño relies heavily on a book by reporter and writer Sergio González Rodríguez of the Mexico City daily *Reforma*, who later became a friend. Titled *Huesos en el desierto* (Bones in the Desert), the book includes a log-style accounting of the hundreds of women killed in Ciudad Juárez (“...23/09/02, Erika Pérez, 25 -30 years old, brown hair...28/08/02, Dora Alicia Martínez Mendoza, 34 years old, 35 stab wounds...”). The book also records the commentary of Robert K. Ressler, American serial killer expert and adviser on the Jonathan Demme film *The Silence of the Lambs*, and paints a portrait of a very tall Egyptian man with a U.S. record of rape and assault, Abdul Latif Sharif, who was fingered as the serial killer. The two men are clearly models for 2666’s Albert Kessler and Klaus Hass.

Despite the novel’s meticulous depiction of victims and killers and Bolaño’s familiar obsession with geographical detail (especially topography and street names), Santa Teresa is above all a city of the imagination, the evocation of a state of mind. In one of his last interviews (with Mónica Maristain for *Playboy*), Bolaño is asked what hell is like, and he says: “Like Ciudad Juárez, which is our curse and our mirror, the unquiet mirror of our frustrations and of our vile interpretation of freedom and our desires.”

p. 622: “*She was nineteen, thin and dark-skinned, with long black hair. She had been raped repeatedly*”: Perhaps the first forerunners of the victims of 2666 are the black-haired Garmendia twins, poets and love objects, murdered by the fascist anti-hero of *Distant Star*. As the narrator of *Distant Star* writes: “Sometimes they appear in my nightmares: the same age as I was, or perhaps a year older, tall, slim, with dark skin and black hair, very long black hair.” Other incarnations of these girls include María and Angélica Font of *The Savage Detectives*. In 2666, **girls with long black hair** are no longer poets but simply victims.

p. 725: “*In the bathroom, curled up in the shower, her hands tied behind her back, Estefanía’s body.... He went in and kneeled down next to Estefanía’s body and examined it*

*carefully, until he lost all sense of time.*” The **return to the scene of the crime** is a moment of longstanding fascination for Bolaño. In the poem “The Detectives” from the collection *The Romantic Dogs* (scheduled for publication in November 2008 from New Directions) Bolaño describes it this way:

I dreamt of a difficult case,  
I saw corridors filled with cops,  
I saw interrogations left unresolved,  
The ignominious archives,  
And then I saw the detective  
Return to the scene of the crime  
Tranquil and alone  
As in the worst nightmares,  
I saw him sit on the floor and smoke  
In a bedroom caked with blood  
While the hands of the clock  
Traveled feebly through the  
Infinite night.

In the *Playboy* interview, Bolaño remarks: “I would have liked to be a homicide detective, much more than a writer. That’s one thing I’m absolutely sure of. A homicide cop, someone able to return alone, at night, to the scene of the crime, and not be afraid of ghosts.”

And more cryptically, from the long, untranslated poem “Un paseo por la literatura”: “47. I dreamed that Baudelaire was making love with a ghost in a room where a crime had been committed. But Baudelaire didn’t care. It’s always the same, he said.” (More Baudelaire; see also notes to Epigraph and p. 226.)

p. 736: “*At the other end of the line he heard a laugh and then a kind of metallic wind, the sound of the desert and of prisons at night*”: As is well known, Bolaño was marked by his short stay in prison during the Pinochet coup in Chile. The Santa Teresa prison acquires an almost anthropomorphic presence in 2666 (“It looks like something alive...Don’t be shocked by what I’m about to say, but it looks like a woman who’s been hacked to pieces. Who’s been hacked to pieces but is still alive. And the prisoners are living *inside* this woman”). One of the characters in the novel makes reference to Piranesi and his **imaginary prisons**, which he sees “extrapolated not exactly in Mexican prisons but in the imaginary and iconographic versions of some Mexican prisons.”

[http://www7.nationalacademies.org/arts/Piranesi\\_Muniz\\_Images.html](http://www7.nationalacademies.org/arts/Piranesi_Muniz_Images.html)

p. 760: “In 1976, the young *María Expósito* met two students from Mexico City in the desert...Three months later, when her great-grandmother asked her about the father of the child she was expecting, the young *María Expósito* had a strange vision”: This is the closest the reader comes to a **sighting of Arturo Belano** in *2666*. But in *El Secreto del Mal* (2007), a posthumous collection of mostly unfinished short stories and essays edited by Ignacio Echevarría, Belano makes two (presumably) final appearances. In “Death of Ulises,” he is a successful writer, forty-six, who returns to Mexico City, ditching a conference on Latin American literature to visit the apartment where Ulises Lima lived before he was struck and killed by a black Impala. Ulises is long gone, but Belano has an encounter with Ulises’s last disciples and with the Mexico City of his own memory. “The morning is a graveyard morning. The sky is dirt yellow. The clouds, which move slowly from south to north, are like lost cemeteries that sometimes break apart, so he can see fragments of gray sky, and sometimes come together with a screech of dry earth that no one, not even he, can hear, and that makes his head ache, as it did when he was a teenager and lived in Colonia Lindavista or in Colonia Guadalupe-Tepeyac.” When a taxi driver asks him whether he’s Mexican, Belano answers “More or less.”

The second story is only a page and a half long, clearly unfinished, and in the last paragraph, Bolaño writes: “Arturo Belano was over fifty and sometimes he thought it was incredible that he was still alive.”

p. 849: “*I’m sick of Mexicans who talk and act as if this is all Pedro Páramo, I said*”: **Pedro Páramo**, by Juan Rulfo, is Mexico’s foundational modern novel. Published in 1955, it tells the story of a man who travels back to Comala, the town where he was born, and finds that it is now a ghost town where life and death are so confused that in the end even the narrator comes to believe himself a ghost.

p. 892: “*Chance or the devil had it that the book Hans Reiter chose to read was Wolfram von Eschenbach’s Parzival*” Von Eschenbach qualifies as another of Bolaño’s preferred marginal writers—an outlier among courtly poets—notable for criticizing other writers—not known for his style (anti-style, like Parra).

p. 710: “*And it was around this time that he met Efraim Ivanov, the science fiction writer*”:

**Soviet science fiction** had two heydays, the first immediately after the Revolution and the second from the mid-1950s to the early 1970s. Ivanov belongs to the first period, though he expires with the movement in the Great Purges of the 1930s. He doesn’t seem to be modeled on any writer in particular, though his pre-Ansky fiction fits the mold of early Soviet utopian storytelling. Bolaño also gives a nod to the great dystopian Soviet writer Yevgeny Ivanovich Zamyatin (Ursula Le Guin called his novel *We* “the best single work of science fiction yet written”) when he names Ansky’s lover Marya Zamyatina.

p. 989: “*There are also notes on Courbet, whom Ansky considers the paradigm of the revolutionary artist.*” Works of visual art are nearly as central to *2666* as literary works. Whether fictional (Edwin Johns and his self-portrait with mummified hand; Conrad Halder and his paintings of dead women) or real, they tend toward the ghostly, grotesque, otherworldly. Besides Courbet, Bolaño makes reference to Giuseppe Arcimboldo (see note to p. 996), Odilon Redon, and **Gustave Moreau** (whose *Jupiter and Semele* is reproduced on the jacket of the English edition of *2666*). In a story from the posthumous collection *El secreto del mal* (2007), Bolaño has more to say about Moreau: “I thought...about Moreau’s *belle inertie*, his beautiful inertia, the method by which Moreau was able to freeze, stop, fix any scene, tumultuous as it might be, on his canvases...the Moreau stillness, some critics call it. The Moreau dread, it’s called by others less fond of his work. Terror inlaid with gems.” See also “The Outsider Ape” in *The Romantic Dogs*: “Remember the *Triumph of Alexander the Great*, by Gustave Moreau?/The beauty and terror, the crystal moment when/all breathing stops.” [http://www.musee-moreau.fr/homes/home\\_id24292\\_u112.htm](http://www.musee-moreau.fr/homes/home_id24292_u112.htm)

p. 734: “*But the paintings of the four seasons were pure bliss. Everything in everything, writes Ansky. As if Arcimboldo had learned a single lesson, but one of vital importance*”: In Arcimboldo’s *Spring* alone, according to a recent *Guardian* review of a show at the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna, “eighty flora have been identified...including dog rose and columbine, strawberries and spinach leaves, jasmine and nettles.” Something like this meticulous maximalism is apparent elsewhere in

2666, in Bolaño's cataloging of species of seaweed and methods of divination, for example. In choosing **Giuseppe Arcimboldo** as the namesake for Benno von Archimboldi, Bolaño was surely also aware of the painter's influence on the Surrealists (Arcimboldo was included in the 1937 exhibition *Fantastic Art, Dada, Surrealism* at the Museum of Modern Art) and thus of the conjunction of Renaissance invention and the 20<sup>th</sup> century avant-garde.  
[http://cartelen.louvre.fr/cartelen/visite?srv=car\\_not\\_frame&idNotice=14268](http://cartelen.louvre.fr/cartelen/visite?srv=car_not_frame&idNotice=14268)

p. 735: "*They also make love in groups. The poet, his wife, and another woman. The poet, his wife, and another man*": This from a short nonfiction piece by Bolaño collected in *Entre paréntesis*: "A few days ago I read that Nadezhda Yakovlevna Mandelstam, exceptional reader, author of two memoirs, one of them called *Hope Against Hope*, and the wife of the assassinated poet Osip Mandelstam, took part in, according to her most recent biography, **ménages à trois** with her husband and that the news had caused shock and disappointment among her admirers, who took her for a saint. I, however, was happy to hear it. I knew that in the middle of winter Nadezhda and Osip didn't freeze and it confirmed for me that at least they tried to read *all* the books."

p. 1208: "*The style was strange. The writing was clear and sometimes even transparent, but the way the stories followed one after another didn't lead anywhere*": It could be argued that the non-sequitur is Bolaño's trademark literary device, and that in it reside all the temptations and terrors of the random. This is evident in both his storytelling and his imagery. Each section of *2666* is increasingly a collection of stories within a story, culminating in the Ansky narrative in Part V, which itself breaks down into any number of side-stories. A disquisition on Courbet leads to the following cascade: "*The Young Ladies on the Banks of the Seine* recalls spies or shipwrecked sailors enjoying a brief rest, and Ansky goes on to say: spies from another planet, and also: bodies that wear out more quickly than other bodies, and also: disease, the transmission of disease, and also: the willingness to stand firm, and also: where does one learn to stand firm? in what kind of school or university? And also: factories, desolate streets, brothels, prisons, and also: the Unknown University." In an insightful essay on *2666* ("Secreto y simulacro en *2666* de Roberto

Bolaño," *Estudios Filológicos*), Patricia Espinosa calls this tendency in Bolaño an "anarchizing rebellion, an impulse toward permanent revolution... **the logic of dispersion.**" Bolaño certainly scorns the kind of rote rationalism exemplified by the graduate students he lampoons in Part I ("rational thinkers" and "*nouveaux* youths"), though he is not averse to an unvarnished plainness. The combination of the random and the everyday creates a novel effect described by Benjamin Kunkel in the *London Review of Books*. He discusses it in connection with the short story "Enrique Martín," but it applies to Bolaño's fiction in general: "You don't feel that Enrique Martín is a robust character inhabiting a well-made story; you feel – whether or not any real-life original ever existed – something perhaps more powerful and certainly, in fiction, more unusual: namely, that he is simply a person, and that instead of having a story he had a life."

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