



2666 is a book about death. It is a book about the murders of hundreds of women that took place in Ciudad Juárez from the mid 90s until the mid 2000s. It is a book about the impossibility and absurdity of trying to find meaning. It is a book about fear and anxiety. It is a slow and relentless march towards the darkest parts of humanity, parts that predicate the privileged existence of us all.

The Part About the Critics

DRAFT 1:

Draft focused on the first section of the book. A lot of time spent on typographic details such as using small caps for anagrams and old style figures.

The first time that Jean-Claude Pelletier read Benno von Archimboldi was Christmas 1980, in Paris, when he was nineteen years old and studying German literature. The book in question was *D'Arsonval*. The young Pelletier didn't realize at the time that the novel was part of a trilogy (made up of the English-themed *The Garden* and the Polish-themed *The Leather Mask*, together with the clearly French-themed *D'Arsonval*), but this ignorance or lapse or bibliographical lacuna, attributable only to his extreme youth, did nothing to diminish the wonder and admiration that the novel stirred in him.

From that day on (or from the early morning hours when he concluded his maiden reading) he became an enthusiastic Archimboldian and set out on a quest to find more works by the author. This was no easy task. Getting hold of books by Benno von Archimboldi in the 1980s, even in Paris, was an effort not lacking in all

THE PART ABOUT AMALFITANO

I DON'T KNOW what I'm doing in Santa Teresa, Amalfitano said to himself after he'd been living in the city for a week. Don't you? Don't you really? He asked himself. Really I don't, he said to himself, and that was as eloquent as he could be.

He had a little single-story house, three bedrooms, a full bathroom and a half bathroom, a combined kitchen—living room—dining room with windows that faced west, a small brick porch where there was a wooden bench worn by the wind that came down from the mountains and the sea, the wind from the north, the wind through the gaps, the wind that smelled like smoke and came from the south. He had books he'd kept for more than twenty-five years. Not many. All of them old. He had books he'd bought in the last ten years, books he didn't mind lending, books that could've been lost or stolen for all he cared. He had books that he sometimes received neatly packaged and with unfamiliar return addresses, books he didn't even open anymore. He had a yard perfect for growing grass and planting flowers, but he didn't know what flowers would do best there—flowers, as opposed to cacti or succulents. There would be time (so he thought)

DRAFT 2:

Made styles for the other three sections based off of their content, including this section based off of pulpy novels.

tral American immigrants, about the hundreds of Mexicans who arrived each day in search of work at the maquiladoras or hoping to cross the border, about the human trafficking by *polleros* and *coyotes*, about the starvation wages paid at the factories, about how those wages were still coveted by the desperate who arrived from Queretaro or Zacatecas or Oaxaca, desperate Christians, said the priest (which was an odd way to describe them, especially for a priest), who embarked on the most incredible journeys, sometimes alone and sometimes with their families in tow, until they reached the border and only then did they rest or cry or pray or get drunk or get high or dance until they fell down exhausted. The priest sounded like he was chanting a litany, and for a moment, as he listened, Sergio Gonzalez closed his eyes and nearly fell asleep. Later they went outside and sat on the brick steps of the church. The priest offered him a Camel and they smoked, gazing at the horizon. So besides being a reporter, what other things do you do in ? the priest asked. For a few seconds, as he breathed in the smoke of his cigarette, Sergio Gonzalez thought about what to answer and couldn't come up with anything. I just got divorced, he said, and I read a lot. What kind of books? The priest wanted to know. Philosophy, more than anything, said Gonzalez. Do you like to read, too? A couple of girls came running by and

DRAFT 3:

Minor changes and clean ups to earlier sections. Revised the sections about the crimes to look like US court documents because I thought it felt more stylistically at home with the rest of the book.

Said the voice. Yes, said Amalfitano. I've thought about my possible and conceivable yard and the plants and tools I need to buy. And you've also thought about your daughter, said the voice, and about the murders committed daily in this city, and about Baudelaire's faggoty (I'm sorry) clouds, but you haven't thought seriously about whether your hand is really a hand. That isn't true, said Amalfitano, I have thought about it, I have. If you had thought about it, said the voice, you'd be dancing to the tune of a different piper. And Amalfitano was silent and he felt that the silence was a kind of eugenics. He looked at his watch. It was four in the morning. He heard someone starting a car. The engine took a while to turn over. He got up and went over to the window. The cars parked in front of the house were empty. He looked behind him and then put his hand on the doorknob. The voice said: be careful, but it said it as if it were very far away, at the bottom of a ravine revealing glimpses of volcanic rock, rhyolites, andesites, streaks of silver and gold, petrified puddles covered with tiny little eggs, while red-tailed hawks soared above in the sky, which was purple like the skin of an Indian woman beaten to death. Amalfitano went out onto the porch. To the left, some thirty feet from his house, the lights of a black car came on and its engine started. When it passed the yard the driver leaned out and looked at Amalfitano without stopping. He was a fat man with very black hair, dressed in a cheap suit with no tie. When he was gone, Amalfitano came back into the house. I didn't like the looks of him, said the voice the minute Amalfitano was through the door. And then: you'll have to be careful, my friend, things here seem to be coming to a head.

So who are you and how did you get here? Asked Amalfitano. There's no point going into it, said the voice. No point? Asked

DRAFT 4:

Complete 360 in terms of direction. I wanted to clearly distinguish the final section from the first three, but also foreshadow the final section typographically. I made the final section look pulpy. This was too subtle.

wouldn't rule it out, but he tried to come up with a different explanation. After much reflection, though, the only thing that made sense was the theory of the lost soul. He thought about the seer of Hermosillo, Madame Cristina, La Santa. He thought about his father. He decided that his father would never use the Mexican words the voice had used, no matter what kind of roving spirit he had become, whereas the slight tinge of homophobia suited him perfectly. With a happiness hard to disguise, he asked himself what kind of mess he had gotten himself into. That afternoon he taught another few classes and then he went walking home. As he passed the central plaza of Santa Teresa he saw a group of women protesting in front of the town hall. On one of the posters he read: No to impunity. On another: End the corruption. A group of policemen were watching the women from under the adobe arches of the colonial building. They weren't riot police but plain Santa Teresa uniformed policemen. As he walked past he heard someone call his name. When he turned he saw Professor Perez and his daughter on the sidewalk across the street. He offered to buy them a soda. At the coffee shop they explained that the protest was to demand transparency in the investigation of the disappearances and killings of women. Professor Perez said she had three feminists from Mexico City staying at her house, and that night she planned to have a dinner for them. I'd like you to come, she said. Rosa said yes. Amalfitano expressed no objection. Then his daughter and Professor Perez returned to the protest and Amalfitano continued on his way.

But before he got home someone called his name again. Professor Amalfitano, he heard someone saying. He turned around and didn't see anyone. He wasn't in the center of the city anymore. He was walking along Avenida Madero, and the four-story buildings had given way to ranch houses, imitations of a kind of

DRAFT 5:

Went back to the more aggressive mono spaced style for the final section and different looks for the first three sections.

Reincorporated the foreshadowing of the fourth draft, now more visibly distinguished from the other text. Best of both worlds.

Given time I'd still like to experiment with things like margins and do more clean up work.

ABOUT THE DESIGN:

This was originally intended to be separate books. This is very evident in terms of how different the subject matter and charters are in each section, but they are all connected because they touch on the murders of women. I wanted to design each sections in a way that reflects both their independence from each other, while also making the narrative glue of the murders related.

Grosz and try to sell it. I don't laugh, I look at it coldly, I appreciate the line, the control, the satire, but nothing about it tickles me. The art critic examines it carefully and gets depressed, in his normal way, and then and there he makes an offer, an offer that exceeds his savings, and that if accepted will condemn him to endless afternoons of melancholy. I try to change his mind. I tell him the drawing strikes me as suspicious because it doesn't make me laugh. The critic says finally I'm looking at Grosz like an adult and gives me his congratulations. Which of the two of us is right?"¶

Then they went back to talking about Archimboldi and Mrs. Bubis showed them a very odd review that had appeared in a Berlin newspaper after the publication of Ludicke, Archimboldi's first novel. The review, by someone named Schleiermacher, tried to sum up the novelist's personality in a few words.

Intelligence:¶	average.¶
Character:¶	epileptic.¶
Scholarship:¶	sloppy.¶
Storytelling ability:¶	chaotic.¶
Prosody:¶	chaotic.¶
German usage:	chaotic.

Average intelligence and sloppy scholarship are easy to understand. What did he mean by epileptic character, though? That Archimboldi had epilepsy? That he wasn't right in the head? That he suffered attacks of a mysterious nature? That he was a compulsive reader of Dostoevsky? There was no physical description of the writer in the piece.¶

"We never knew who this man Schleiermacher was," said Mrs. Bubis, "and sometimes my late husband would joke that Archimboldi himself had written the review. But he knew as well as I did that it wasn't true."¶

Near midday, when it was time to leave, Pelletier and Espinoza dared to ask the only question they thought really mattered: could she help them get in touch with Archimboldi? Mrs. Bubis's eyes lit up. As if she were at the scene of a fire, Pelletier told Liz Norton later. Not a raging blaze, but a fire that was about to go out, after burning for months. Her no came as a slight shake of the head that made Pelletier and Espinoza abruptly aware of the futility of their plea.¶

Still, they stayed a while longer. From somewhere in the house came the muted strains of an Italian popular song. Espinoza asked whether she knew Archimboldi, whether she had ever seen him in person while her husband was alive. Mrs. Bubis said she had and then, under her breath, she sang the song's final chorus. Her Italian, according to the two friends, was very good.¶

"What is Archimboldi like?" asked Espinoza.¶

"Very tall," said Mrs. Bubis, "very tall, a man of truly great height. If he'd been born in this day and age he likely would have played basketball."¶

Although by the way she said it, Archimboldi might as well have been a dwarf. In the taxi back to the hotel the two friends thought about Grosz and about Mrs. Bubis's cruel, crystalline laugh and about the impression left by that house full of photographs, where nevertheless the photograph of the only writer they cared about was missing. And although neither wanted to admit it, both believed (or sensed) that the flash of insight granted to them in the

the voice. No, said Amalfitano. For example, why not go to a nursery and buy seeds and plants and maybe even a little tree to plant in the middle of your backyard? Said the voice. Yes, said Amalfitano. I've thought about my possible and conceivable yard and the plants and tools I need to buy. And you've also thought about your daughter, said the voice, and about the murders committed daily in this city, and about Baudelaire's faggoty (I'm sorry) clouds, but you haven't thought seriously about whether your hand is really a hand. That isn't true, said Amalfitano, I have thought about it, I have. If you had thought about it, said the voice, you'd be dancing to the tune of a different piper. And Amalfitano was silent and he felt that the silence was a kind of eugenics. He looked at his watch. It was four in the morning. He heard someone starting a car. The engine took a while to turn over. He got up and went over to the window. The cars parked in front of the house were empty. He looked behind him and then put his hand on the doorknob. The voice said: be careful, but it said it as if it were very far away, at the bottom of a ravine revealing glimpses of volcanic rock, rhyolites, andesites, streaks of silver and gold, petrified puddles covered with tiny little eggs, while red-tailed hawks soared above in the sky, which was purple like the skin of an Indian woman beaten to death. Amalfitano went out onto the porch. To the left, some thirty feet from his house, the lights of a black car came on and its engine started. When it passed the yard the driver leaned out and looked at Amalfitano without stopping. He was a fat man with very black hair, dressed in a cheap suit with no tie. When he was gone, Amalfitano came back into the house. I didn't like the looks of him, said the voice the minute Amalfitano was through the door. And then: you'll have to be careful, my friend, things here seem to be coming to a head. ¶

» So who are you and how did you get here? Asked Amalfitano. There's no point going into it, said the voice. No point? Asked Amalfitano, laughing in a whisper, like a fly. There's no point, said the voice. Can I ask you a question? Said Amalfitano. Go ahead, said the voice. Are you really the ghost of my grandfather? The things you come up with, said the voice. Of course not, I'm the spirit of your father. Your grandfather's spirit doesn't remember you anymore. But I'm your father and I'll never forget you. Do you understand? Yes, said Amalfitano. Do you understand that you have nothing to fear from me? Yes, said Amalfitano. Do something useful, then check that all the doors and windows are shut tight and go to sleep. Something useful like what? Asked Amalfitano. For example, wash the dishes, said the voice. And Amalfitano lit a cigarette and began to do what the voice had suggested. You wash and I'll talk, said the voice. All is calm, said the voice. There's no bad blood between us. The headache, if you have a headache, will go away soon, and so will the buzzing in your ears, the racing pulse, the rapid heartbeat. You'll relax, you'll think some and relax, said the voice, while you do something useful for your daughter and yourself. Understood, whispered Amalfitano. Good, said the voice, this is like an endoscopy, but painless. Got it, whispered Amalfitano. And he scrubbed the plates and the pot with the remains of pasta and tomato sauce and the forks and the glasses and the stove and the table where they'd eaten, smoking one cigarette after another and also taking occasional gulps of water straight from the faucet. And at five in the morning he took the dirty clothes out of the bathroom hamper and went out into the backyard and put the clothes in the washing machine and pushed the button for a normal wash and looked at Dieste's book hanging motionless and then he went back into the living room and his eyes, like the eyes of an addict, sought out something else to clean or tidy or wash, but he couldn't find anything and he sat

When Fate heard footsteps approaching he thought they were the footsteps of a giant. Guadalupe Roncal must have thought something similar, because she seemed about to faint, but instead of fainting, she clung to the prison official's hand and then his lapel. Rather than pull away, he put his arm around her shoulders. Fate felt his body next to him. He heard voices. As if the inmates were egging someone on. He heard laughter and calls to order, and then the black clouds from the east passed over the prison and the air seemed to darken. The footsteps came closer. He heard laughter and pleas. Suddenly a voice began to sing a song. It sounded like a woodcutter chopping down trees. The voice wasn't singing in English. At first Fate couldn't figure out what the language was, until, beside him, said it was German. The voice grew louder. It occurred to Fate that he might still be dreaming. The trees fell one by one. I'm a giant lost in the middle of a burned forest. But someone will come to rescue me. Translated the suspect's string of curses for him. A polyglot woodcutter, thought Fate, who speaks English as well as he speaks Spanish and who sings in German. I'm a giant lost in the middle of a charred forest. And yet only I know where I'm going, only I know my destiny. And then the footsteps and the laughter could be heard once more, and the goading and words of encouragement of the inmates and the guards escorting the giant. And then an enormous and very blond man came into the visitors' room, ducked his head, as if he were afraid of knocking it on the ceiling, and smiled as if he had just done something naughty, singing the German song about the lost woodcutter and fixing them all with an intelligent and mocking gaze. Then the guard accompanying him asked Guadalupe Roncal if she would prefer that he be handcuffed to the chair and Guadalupe Roncal shook her head and the guard gave the tall man a little pat

on the shoulder and left and the official who was standing with Fate and the women went out too, though not before saying something into Guadalupe Roncal's ear, and they were left alone. ¶

"Good morning," said the giant in Spanish. He sat down and stretched his legs under the table so that his feet stuck out the other side. ¶

He was wearing black tennis shoes and white socks. Guadalupe Roncal took a step back. ¶

"Ask whatever you want," said the giant. ¶

Guadalupe Roncal raised her hand to her mouth, as if she were inhaling a toxic gas, and she couldn't think what to ask. ¶

THE PART ABOUT THE CRIMES ¶

¶

» The girl's body turned up in a vacant lot in Colonia Las Flores. She was dressed in a white long-sleeved T-shirt and a yellow knee-length skirt, a size too big. Some children playing in the lot found her and told their parents. One of the mothers called the police, who showed up half an hour later. The lot was bordered by Calle Pelaez and Calle Hermanos Chacon and it ended in a ditch behind which rose the walls of an abandoned dairy in ruins. There was no one around, which at first made the policemen think it was a joke. Nevertheless, they pulled up on Calle Pelaez and one of them made his way into the lot. Soon he came across two women with their heads