

Critical Insights: Roberto Bolaño



“The late writer Roberto Bolaño, responsible for a number of poems, essays, and short stories as well as his prize-winning novel *The Savage Detectives*, was described by *The New York Times* as the “most significant Latin American literary voice of his generation.” Exploring themes such as the artist’s ability to comprehend the struggles of life, of the rampant violence particular to Latin America in the 1970’s and 1980’s, Bolaño passed away at the early age of fifty. This volume in the Critical Insights series gathers essays from a variety of Bolaño scholars which examine many aspects of his work, ranging from the relationship between his poetry and prose to a discussion of film adaptations of his works and more.

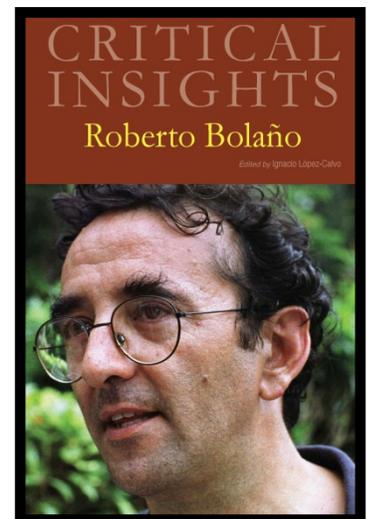
The book’s opening chapters establish Bolaño’s personal story: Born in Chile to a lower-middle-class family, he grew up in a time of political upheaval and moved between his native country and Mexico where his affiliation with left-wing dissenters would ultimately influence his writing. His early works, mainly poems, were defined by the infrarealism movement, which he co-founded: marginal in the scheme of things and reactionary to the commercial and critical success of authors such as Octavio Paz, Isabel Allende, and others.

The book’s Critical Contexts section then presents four essays delving more deeply into Bolaño’s world. They describe the influence of Latin American history on his work, particularly the impact of the 1973 Chilean military coup, his reception from critics with mind to his early death, and publishing concerns, among other things.

The Critical Readings section is focused topically and examines thematic continuity within Bolaño’s writings, the impact of US literature on him, the presence of queer themes, the contrast between his *Una novelita lumpen* (2002) and its film adaption *Il future* (2013), and more. For example Ruben Medina’s essay entitled “Bolaño’ and Infrarealism, or Ethics as Politics” discusses Bolaño’s relationship to the literary movement and how it provides the foundation for comprehending his work.

A brief Resources section rounds out this book by providing a chronology of Bolaño’s life, a listing of published works, a bibliography, and information on the contributors. This book goes far to elevate Bolaño’s profiles as one of Latin America’s most compelling men of letters.”

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