

Sánchez Lopera, Alejandro. *José Revueltas y Roberto Bolaño: Formas genéricas de la experiencia*. Raleigh, NC: Editorial A Contracorriente, 2017. 276 pp.

RYAN LONG
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

Mexico is the basic reason for Alejandro Sánchez Lopera's comparison of José Revueltas and Roberto Bolaño. For about nine years, Bolaño lived in the country whose politics Revueltas dedicated his life to comprehending and changing and, like Revueltas, wrote about the 1968 events. More than half of Sánchez Lopera's book is dedicated to the year 1968, a period that comprises its middle chapters and connects the previous chapters' attention to Revueltas's representation of the Mexican Revolution and later chapters' focus on Pinochet's overthrow of Allende and dictatorship. Mexico 1968 centers the book temporally because it provides the point of contact between events from two Latin American nations' histories, which allows Sánchez Lopera to define and address the main topics of his analysis—sovereignty and territory, the question of how to visualize thinking, cruelty, sadism, memory, fascism, and calculability.

The principal strength of Sánchez Lopera's book arises from how he treats the obvious fact that Chile and Mexico are two different nations; therefore, the temporal points of connection between them cannot also be spatial. Sánchez Lopera does not turn this fundamental distinction into how to find common ground between these two countries. Instead, he departs from it and challenges the coherency of Mexico's, Chile's, and Latin America's literarily and philosophically constructed chronotopes. In Sánchez Lopera's objects of study and in his critical practice, generic forms of experience cross several borders, including those of time and space, of different critical and philosophical trajectories, and of individual and collective subjectivities. Of particular concern throughout the book is the additional border between discourse and materiality. Sánchez Lopera seeks a detailed and accurate comprehension of the material forces of history by analyzing writers he considers anti-subjective, and whose writing therefore makes visible its own limitations in regard to the depiction of, thinking about, and engagement with history. This visibility in turn demands a persistent process of inquiry and critique, a process whose primary objects are power, resistance, and how to write about power and resistance.

Sánchez Lopera's dialectical approach aims to refuse a comprehension of history that takes an ordered and moralist narrative as its foundation and aspiration. He sees in Revueltas and Bolaño two

writers whose thinking and storytelling enact this refusal while they also help readers and critics consider how to do likewise. Instead of order and morality, Sánchez Lopera's book emphasizes exteriority, excess, materiality, and power. For instance, in a particularly insightful formulation, Sánchez Lopera describes the consequences of Revueltas's imprisonment in the Islas Mariás as obliging him to embark on an erratic voyage of the imagination that traces the limits of nationalist and developmentalist accumulations of knowledge (48), a rejection that helps Revueltas, as Sánchez Lopera explains in his reading of the novel *Los errores* (1964), "captar los errores del siglo [XX] desde los errores mismos, y no desde el acierto o lo correcto" (49). Temporal and subjective excess are the pillars of anti-subjective narration in Bolaño's novel *Amuleto* (1999), whose protagonist, Auxilio Lacouture, embodies a form of memory that is resistant and neither linear nor individual (166-167). Sánchez Lopera argues persuasively that moralizing and ordered discourses cannot explain the persistence of cruelty, sadism, and fascism manifested in the events and consequences of 1968 and 1973. He develops this argument particularly well in his reading of Bolaño's *Estrella distante* (1996), whose focus on the character of Carlos Wieder places Pinochet's dictatorship in a broader context of Chilean fascism and reveals it to be a political and ideological structure that belies notions of sovereignty based on a distinction between the human and the barbarous (175-77).

Narratives of order and morality, which rely on teleology, subjectivity and psychology, are confronted by the limits of both human perception and the capacity of discourse to rationalize historical materiality. An especially significant contribution that Sánchez Lopera's book makes to Latin American literary and philosophical studies is its explanation of how Revueltas considers and portrays these perceptive limits. In combined readings of several texts, including the novel *Los muros de agua* (1941) and the essay "Autogestión académica, y universidad crítica" (1978), Sánchez Lopera shows how Revueltas thinks through the difference between experience and discourse by developing a cinematic method of reading and writing about history and politics. Sánchez Lopera concludes, "los procedimientos de Revueltas recuerdan que la imagen movimiento es la máquina de hacer ver afectos y sensaciones que el discurso oscurece; el discurso opera ordenando y conteniendo lo múltiple" (59). This reading of Revueltas helps Sánchez Lopera explain the value of striving to think less from the point of view of people and more from that of objects (12). In a good contribution to scholarship about Bolaño, Sánchez Lopera traces the degradation of a formerly privileged human and humanist point of view in the figure of Sebastián Urrutia-Lacroix, the literary critic and priest who narrates *Nocturno de Chile* (2000). Neoliberalism does away with the power of the expert who guards the walls

of literary quality and salvation. It structures relations of power instead around sheer calculability and absolute exchangeability.

Through its comparison of Revueltas and Bolaño in historical context, Sánchez Lopera's book contributes significantly to the understanding of how each author thinks through sociopolitical topics in their writing. More important still is the book's critique of morality and order, which is based on an elucidation of generic forms in Revueltas and Bolaño and the practice of generic thinking about them. Though the repeated references to Deleuze, Nietzsche, and Weber are at times superfluous, Sánchez Lopera's knowledgeable engagement with the ideas of these and other thinkers supports the anti-territorial, anti-teleological, and anti-psychological generic thinking his book defends.

Among the book's weaknesses are numerous typographical errors and burdensome digressions, both of which reveal the need for more careful editing. In more substantial terms, a sustained consideration of differences among genres and types of writing would have made the book's analysis more precise. By placing non-fiction and fiction on more or less equal footing, the book raises questions about the specificities of literary form which it leaves unanswered. Another problem of substance emerges from the book's asymmetrical organization. Its chapters about Revueltas integrate carefully several texts into explorations of topics organized more around ideas than particular novels or essays. By contrast, the chapters about Bolaño focus on one novel. This difference weakens the book's case for a critique of coherency because it relies on treating Bolaño's texts more as individual works than as overlapping and interrelated considerations of ideas. The book's most serious problem is the way it imposes its own form of order. It does so primarily in the form of identifying certain other scholars of Revueltas, 1968, 1973, and Bolaño as belonging to categories, such as "*norteamericano*" and "*fantológico*." The categorical division arising from this identification that, it must be said, sometimes gives very short shrift to other scholars' work, risks enacting the kind of foundational order the book strives to and generally succeeds in thinking beyond and against.