

## Introduction

In the past two decades, superhero films based on comic book characters have grossed some of the highest ticket sales in US and worldwide box offices. As Martin Zeller-Jacques points out, “Since the turn of the Millennium, Hollywood-produced superhero movies have dominated U.S. and global box offices. This cycle of films, beginning with *X-Men* (Brian Singer, 2000) and continuing to the present day, has provided three of the ten highest grossing films of all time . . . [and] earned a new cultural respectability for superheroes” (195).<sup>1</sup> In many Latin American markets, recent Hollywood action films, many of which are of the superhero genre, have topped individual weekend and yearly sales; in Mexico during 2012, 2013, and 2016, for example, the highest grossing films per weekend belonged to *The Avengers*, *Iron Man 3*, and *Captain America: Civil War* respectively.<sup>2</sup> In the latter year, the top three spots were occupied by films from the Marvel and DC cinematic universes.<sup>3</sup> The years 2018 and 2019 have unsurprisingly been dominated by Marvel’s *Infinity War* and *Endgame*. In other words, audiences to the south of the Rio Grande are now lapping up the muscled bodies, ample cleavage, computer-generated special effects, and repetitive narrative structures that have now become the standard bearer for Hollywood. One may even say that the superhero has become a colonizing genre, a vector of cultural imperialism that has quietly overrun local markets.

Such crossover commercial success in Latin American markets comes as no surprise, given the historical and cultural ubiquity of these figures in print and film media and their rapid circulation to global viewer- and readerships from their very beginning in the mid-twentieth century. What may be questioned, however, is the relative lack of local comic book superheroes that have made their presence felt on the screen. Latin

America, after all, has a rich tradition of comics and superheroes. These include such characters as El Aguila Solitaria, Súper Cóndor, Patoruzú, Supercifuentes, El Santo, Kalimán, Capitão 7, and Sónoman that have all graced the pages of Latin American comic book production, and to much commercial success, their issues often being sold across the Spanish-speaking world. Yet perhaps no other superhero is as well-known or as exported as El Chapulín Colorado, who has even influenced the US imaginary of the archetype, as evidenced by the parodic Bumblebee Man in *The Simpsons*, and Marvel's Red Locust (the superhero persona of Fernanda Ramírez) who made her debut in late 2017.

Given these market conditions and cultural substrates, we may ask why, then, the lack of adaptations in recent cinema, or even original superheroes making their blockbuster debut on the screen and competing with ticket sales of *The Avengers* and *The Justice League*, especially in a (inter)national cinemascapes overrun by the genre. This lack in commercial cinema is especially significant given the serial success and ubiquity of Latin American superheroes in a variety of media, such as *El Chapulín Colorado* (television, 1972–79) and wrestler-superheroes such as El Santo (film, animated film, 1950s–) in Mexican and then Latin American markets. It is remarkable, since some of the most internationally renowned Mexican directors—who often wear the mantle of “Latin America” in global discussions on film—have successfully either made traditional superhero films (Guillermo del Toro—*Hellboy*, *Hellboy 2*, *Blade 2*) or films in which the cultural capital of the superhero is highlighted (Alejandro González Iñárritu—*Birdman*). But this absence is not only to note in multiplexes and streaming sites that now often substitute for the experience of going to the movies; perhaps more remarkable is the lack of any mention of a Latin American superhero flick in Rayna Denison and Rachel Mizsei-Ward's recent anthology on global superheroes, *Superheroes on World Screens* (2015), where contemporary characters from India, England, Australia, Thailand, Japan, and Korea are featured.<sup>4</sup>

All this is not to say, however, that there are no contemporary Latin American superheroes coexisting in the mediascape dominated by Marvel (and, to a lesser extent, DC) characters. There is indeed a broad spectrum of characters who have erupted onto the local and regional stage in recent years that have gained a popular and cult following with audiences in the know, and with casual browsers of social media and YouTube that click on a viral video of a parodic Capitán Centroamérica or Chinche Man. These characters are at times adaptations of comic book

heroes (such as O Doutrinador and Zambo Dende), and at other times original superheroes born in the moving image, circulated through cinema and serial mechanisms and outlets that speak to an audience saturated in the US hegemony of the genre. (There are even characters created for specific purposes, though they fall outside the parameters of this book, such as Susana Distancia, a superheroine at the forefront of the Mexican government's tardy efforts to encourage social-distancing in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic.) As I will show in the following pages, the Latin American superhero is very much alive in popular media and film, and it demands a critical study that situates it within a broader examination of cultural output and critique.

The literature to date on contemporary Latin American superheroes on the screen is scarce, perhaps in part due to the relative lack of productions and the genre's association with exploitation, popular, and low-budget cinema. Several scholars, such as Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart, David William Foster, Héctor Fernández L'Hoeste, and Juan Poblete, have made important inroads into the analysis of print comics and superheroes, an important precursor of the filmic genre.<sup>5</sup> Tangentially, Frederick Luis Aldama's *Latinx Superheroes in Mainstream Comics* (2017) is also an imperative touching stone, as the manuscript pores over a vast print archive of the superhero genre to establish just how embedded Latin/o American subjects and identities are within the field. Regarding the presence of the Latin American superhero in film, a useful point of departure is Carlos Aguasaco's work in *¡No contaban con mi astucia! México: Parodia, nación y sujeto en la serie de El Chapulín Colorado* (2014), where he examines the parodic character of the series to argue that the television show is a metonym of the failed development of the nation (and, more broadly speaking, Latin America) in the latter half of the twentieth century. Aguasaco's detailed analysis of parody as narrative mode is fundamental in understanding the broader regional archetype, as parody often is the foundation on which many of the Latin American superhero narratives today are erected.

Another thread to follow is the work on the Mexican wrestler films of the 1960s through the 1980s. Monographs by Robert Michael Cotter, Doyle Greene, and Raul Criollo, Xavier Nava, and Rafael Aviña provide a methodical compilation and analysis of characters such as Neutrón, La Sombra Vengadora, Mil Máscaras, Blue Demon, and Superzán, and how they galvanized a popular audience into buying into their fantastical confrontations with werewolves, vampires, and extraterrestrials. These

studies—which I address in detail in the following chapter—importantly, align the oeuvre of films with a distinct Mexican body of cinema, instead of establishing points of contact with the broader field of superhero studies, perhaps explaining the absence of Latin American superheroes within global discussions of the movie genre.

Keeping this in mind, *Capitán Latinoamérica* contextualizes and analyzes recent superhero-themed cinema, television, and web series produced in Latin America, within a broader conversation on the boom of the superhero genre in global cinema. Through an analysis and commentary of features and series from Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Brazil and Argentina, I argue that contemporary Latin American superheroes are an amalgam of regional archetypes (namely, tropes of the famed Mexican *luchador* and the parodic mode of El Chapulín) and North American blockbuster characters from the DC and Marvel universes.<sup>6</sup> In addition to poetically and aesthetically being a hybrid of Latin and Anglo identities, Latin American superheroes, importantly, channel specific local anxieties that already dominate the cultural horizon of their respective national contexts; that is, these local superheroes (though global in lineage and circulation) participate in cultural, social, political, and economic conversations *in situ*. In Chile, for example, *Mirageman* rehashes and works through issues of the Pinochet dictatorship and its traumatic aftermath, while in *Chinche Man*, issues of neoliberalism and gang violence in Honduras are the principal thematic nodes. In *El Man*, in turn, the rapid urbanization of Colombia (and its relationship to drug cartels) is the central concern of the parodic protagonist, whereas corruption, cynicism, and the political machinations of the state feature in the television and web series of *Capitán Centroamérica*. While these superheroes may superficially be characterized by their low budgets and kitsch aesthetic, they do, upon closer examination, problematize the complex issues facing contemporary Latin America. This analytic strategy follows Aguasaco's interpellation of the archetype with broader concerns (though not necessarily centered on the notion of superhero as metonym), thus reading the superhero beyond the frontiers of the narrative and diegesis, and onto an intricate cultural terrain populated by a variety of sociopolitical actors and issues.

Through the study of superheroes across media platforms and narrative modes, I argue in *Capitán Latinoamérica* that contemporary Latin American superheroes are digital natives, their origin stories firmly rooted in the Internet and smartphone age, and use tech and web platforms to connect to their engaged public in a democratic fashion. They are truly

bottom-up heroes; that is, they arise and emanate from the populace in times of greatest need, demonstrating that the “hero” in the superhero can be anyone and everyone, readily available to the common person through a quick email, text message, or video call. In doing so, Latin American superheroes importantly—unlike their US counterparts—often challenge the politicoeconomic status quo, instead of defending, as Umberto Eco has argued, the structural tenets of injustice that are often smoothed over in archetypal Anglo narratives. American superheroes, after all, are known for maintaining the status quo even while apprehending the villain, as villainy is constrained to succinct ruptures of the legal fabric, leading Richard Reynolds to observe that “the ideological import of the superhero is to inflict a sense of powerlessness and resignation on readers. . . . A key ideological myth of the superhero comic is that the normal and everyday enshrines positive values that must be defended through heroic action . . . the superhero is battling on behalf of the status quo” (236–37).<sup>7</sup>

The Latin American superhero, however, is, significantly, an agent of change, a point of critical inflection and introspection, a narrative genre that probes and questions the (social, political, and economic) status quo, quite unlike the ontologically inert and impotent North American trope that superficially masquerades as a hero of the subaltern, all while maintaining in place the principles of savage capitalism and US geopolitical hegemony.

In broad strokes, their bodies, stories, and powers are strongly local, both in terms of issues and themes and in reference to their genetic antecedent, namely, the dyad of El Chapulín-El Santo, that made the first forays of the region into a global superhero mediascape. Regarding the former, Latin American superheroes often rely on parody to critique systems of power and control, deploying the genre and its powers to undermine autocratic and overbearing regimes. In terms of the latter, these superheroes harness the fact that the greatest Latin American superhero effectively did not have any real superpower besides his mask, honor, and faith (especially in the earlier films), suggesting that good character and strong physical aptitudes are enough to truly become a superhero for the people. In fact, many of the superheroes analyzed in the following pages lack a true superhuman power. This may be because of their archetypal antecedents (which I examine in the following chapter), or simply because the superhero tends to come from humble origins, an everyman that due to circumstance dons a mask and costume to intervene when the Law proves futile. Secondly, their narratives are also often heavily inflected by US–Latin American relations; that is, the Latin American superhero

often arises out of the impossibility *and* rejection of translating the North American figure to the reality of Latin America. This is no surprise, as El Chapulín often notes that he is the local superhero that the people yearn for, unlike Super Sam, who barges in, imposing his own will on a public that wants nothing to do with him, not unlike US incursions into the territories in the post–World War II stage.<sup>8</sup> In other words, these superheroes, their supervillains, and their narrative arcs meditate on both palpable local issues and transnational debates, often characterized by the politicoeconomic relationship between the Northern hegemon and local territories.

An illustrative example of this is found in Enchufetv’s two YouTube skits titled “Superhéroes en Latinoamérica.” It may seem odd at first that our discussion of superhero films begins in a medium that is not the typical feature film, but this concern is quickly mitigated by the fact that superheroes have never been exclusive to a particular platform, or, as Denison and Mizsei-Ward remind us, “the superhero is . . . an emphatically transmedia phenomenon; or, at very least, needs to be conceptualized as a genre whose wide-ranging manifestations are hard to pin down to an original or even dominant source” (4). The production conditions of Enchufetv itself, furthermore, may give us clues as to the lack of superhero films—seeing themselves strapped by possibilities in commercial television and film (mediascapes that prefer importing and dubbing successful US productions), the creative voices behind the YouTube channel decided to self-produce skits and shorts and upload them directly to the digital streaming site (“Humor ecuatoriano”). Since 2011, the channel has garnered over 18 million subscribers and 3 billion views, while their Facebook page has over 10 million followers, with the largest audiences residing in Colombia and Mexico.<sup>9</sup> The fact that these streaming videos garner significant audiences beyond the country of production (Ecuador) establishes them as useful references in conceptualizing a “Latin American” superhero genre.<sup>10</sup>

The skits in question that interest us are “Superhéroes en Latinoamérica” (2015) and “Superhéroes en Latinoamérica 2” (2015), both of which were filmed in Colombia and at a moment where the international mediascape was dominated by various superhero characters and films. The first skit opens with a green screen with white text, a replica of MPAA screens that display the following text: “The following preview has been approved to accompany this feature” (for web trailers this is modified to “the following preview has been approved for appropriate audiences”).

“Superhéroes en Latinoamérica,” however, begins with no such warning or note. Instead, we are greeted with the following epilogue: “The following sketch is only for us to laugh at our beautiful and complex idiosyncrasies. If you wonder why the ‘gringo’ superheroes speak like Latinos, it’s because the accent quickly sticks. Warning: you were an unwanted baby. PS: subscribe, it’s free and your mom will never find out” (“El siguiente sketch es únicamente para reirnos de nuestra hermosa y compleja idiosincrasia. Si se pregunta por qué los superhéroes ‘gringos’ hablan como latinos, es porque el acento se pega rápido. Advertencia: no fuiste un bebé deseado. PD: suscríbete, es gratis y tu mamá nunca se va a enterar”).<sup>11</sup> There are several issues that merit comment here: the acknowledgement of “our beautiful and complex idiosyncrasies” points to the cohesion of a singular “latino” identity, one that allowed for the marketability and popularity of *El Chapulín* decades before to a transnational audience; and that the superheroes featured in the skit are translocated “gringos” who have quickly picked up local characteristics, without having shed their gringo identities. The title of the skit further evokes the notion that superheroes are imports and not autochthonous characters or tropes. That being said, they are imports that have been resemanticized through local idioms and issues. The parody of the green-screen credits adds to this, as the creators rework an ever-present image into a point of comedic inflections.

The skit begins with the page-flipping intro credits that global audiences have come to identify with the Marvel media universe. This is the next step in parody, as we are presented with the familiar, which will then be exaggerated for comedic effect, not unlike the opening credits of *Capitán Centroamérica*. By (re)using a format perfected by Marvel, the skit situates itself within a global genealogy of the superhero, yet by modifying the images within the montage, it also successfully indicates to the viewer that what is to come is similar yet different, a global archetype or narrative with now distinctively local accents. A female newscaster greets us, informing the viewer and viewing public that the US government has decided that superheroes are a danger to public security and that they are now being exiled, and will be transferred to “a place where their destruction will go unnoticed . . . Latin America” (“un lugar donde su destrucción no se note mucho . . . Latinoamérica”). Between the newscaster noting their exile and the government’s decision to move them, a soft dissolve transitions to a shot of the newscaster on a screen, and the camera pulls out, showing the image on a small television set in a workplace (which we soon discover is security at a Latin American airport). This detail, at the

very beginning of the skit, may seem innocuous, but we must remember that films in the genre tend to begin with important “origin” information, or scenes that somehow explicate the poetics of the particular hero and his or her becoming super.

The opening sequence of “Superhéroes en Latinoamérica” after the zoom out follows with a security guard calling superheroes a “stupidity” (“pendejada”). The guard’s dismissive attitude towards the superhero may perhaps be a reflection of why there has been no serious and nonparodic superhero film in the region, yet it may also signal the audience’s perception that the antics and powers of archetypal superheroes would never work in a reality that is not Metropolis or Gotham. Guillermo Helo’s recent feature-length film, *Niñas Araña* (2017) (whose plot has nothing to do with superheroes), alludes to this, as the protagonist comments at the very end that Spiderman would never survive in the Santiago that she inhabits. In fact, US superheroes rarely venture away from their North American skylines, and when they do, they only tend to go to Europe (see *Avengers: Infinity War* or *Spider-Man: Far from Home*).

Returning to the skit, a character with blatant similarities to Wolverine attempts to pass through security but is met with blaring alarms from the metal detector. When he tries to explain that his skeleton is infused with adamantium—a fictional, nearly indestructible alloy—the guards sarcastically ask him if he will regenerate from the anal probing they are about to perform as part of their security protocol.

There are two important notes to glean from this short introductory scene, as a sort of blueprint for contemporary films in the genre: first, the use of parodic devices and satire, and the allusion to the tensions between the North and South, evokes a connection to the poetics of the Chapulín, as an ontoformative reference in any Latin American attempt at a superhero; and second, the focus on the superhero’s masculinity as a point of negotiation and demythification. Addressing the former, the skit calls our attention to the portrayal of “Latin America” as a Cold War backwater of the United States; a forgotten space where the rule of law (Western and international) does not apply. In regards to the latter, unlike the North American referents that were ontological to masculine codes of the time (see the aesthetics and etymology of Superman, for example) the superhero when reterritorialized in the Latin American cultural sphere is not immune to *albures* (puns) and emasculatory exchanges, no longer protected by the cape and musculature of the costume but, instead, a self-reflexive coda of masculinity that can be questioned, disarticulated, and refashioned.<sup>12</sup>



El Chapulín—as I will comment in the next chapter—often infantilized and feminized Superman and Batman, so it should come as no surprise that the purportedly masculine North American superhero is undressed as comically and misogynistically inadequate.

The confluence of these two issues is developed in subsequent scenes when we see how ineffective these Anglo superheroes are in Latin America. Batman is a drunk who doesn't speak Spanish, while Spiderman cannot swing freely from skyscraper to skyscraper, as there are none in this metonymic space that is Latin America; when he does manage to sail through the air, he gets caught up in the labyrinth of power lines running across the urban ceiling. “Superhéroes en Latinoamérica 2” portrays similar moments of contact between the narratives and heroes from the North, and the local conditions in which they must now operate as *deportados* or deportees. Captain America, for example, is confused with El Santo by a young boy and his mother seeking a photographic memento. When he informs them that he is not the famous Mexican luchador, but Captain America, the mother quite rightly wonders if the flag on his iconic shield is that of Chile or Puerto Rico. The skit plays with the aesthetics of this character to harvest a critique of US geopolitics, as the Captain explains that America is the United States. The mother and son quickly retort that America is the entire continent, and that only the US with its bloated sense of self-importance would go so far as to claim the whole for itself.

These two short skits, with over 36.5 million views between them, provide an important substrate for contextualizing recent productions.



Figure I.1. Batman as a belligerent gringo in Latin America.

Importantly, the two videos suggest that the contemporary Latin American superhero is self-reflexive both of the genre's principal traits and of its relationship with archetypal figures from the North American archive. The presence and transmission of the videos through freely available web platforms also further the notion that the contemporary Latin American superhero is often born from popular mediums and channels, and not through big-budget, top-down productions. This characteristic, in turn, explains my broadening the corpus to include television and web serials, as to simply cordon off filmic productions would do a disservice to the state of the superhero in contemporary cultural production. In fact, as I explore in the study of *Chinche Man* and *Capitán Centroamérica*, Latin American superheroes are dynamic, genre-transgressing characters and narratives that move seamlessly across production mechanisms and circulatory networks, engaging local and diasporic viewers across mediums and devices.

Every superhero needs an origin story, and *Capitán Latinoamérica* is no different. In chapter 1, I examine the first Latin American superheroes who appeared in television and film, namely, the Mexican *El Chapulín Colorado* (television, 1972–79) and *El Santo* and a cohort of other wrestlers (1950s onwards). I begin this chapter by outlining the presence of these tropes in contemporary media, before moving to a study of several cult films featuring *El Santo* and other wrestlers such as *Blue Demon*. I lay out the characteristics of the wrestler-as-superhero trope, paying attention to the constructs of ideology, gender, and politics and how they are conjugated in a variety of films that also include characters initially crafted as superheroes (and not wrestlers) and female superheroes. Included in this discussion is a tracing of the filmic archive to a print medium, wherein I argue—through ideas at the nexus of comics and film studies—that the *Santo* films are really adaptations of a comic book oeuvre, and are thus not altogether different from similar US adaptations that successfully made the jump to the moving image. I also map out the relationship between the luchador and films featuring *Kalimán*, one of the very few comic book heroes that is adapted to the cinema. Next, I analyze *El Chapulín* and its recourse to parody as a narrative and aesthetic mode to portray the superhero. I focus on the powers that this hero lacks, linking the trope of the parodic superhero to issues of gender hegemony and political critique. The chapter concludes with a speculation that the *Santo* and *Chapulín* genealogies come to a close in the 1980s and 1990s as a symptom of economic crises and the transformation of the Mexican economy and everyday life under the purview of neoliberal policies.

Chapter 2 begins the case-study section of this project, wherein I examine contemporary superhero moving images within particular socio-cultural contexts. In this section, I analyze Harold Trompetero's *El Man, el superhéroe nacional* (2009) within the horizon of Colombian cultural production. Trompetero's protagonist follows the superhero-as-parody archetype favored by El Chapulín, featuring a taxi driver, Felipe, who dons yellow, blue, and red spandex (representing the national flag) to become El Man, the defender of the poor and disenfranchised in Bogotá. He fights against an old neighbor, Federico Rico, who with an ill-gained fortune wants to displace Felipe and his neighbors from their homes in the historic center of the city. The film's parodic mode runs in stark contrast to critically acclaimed Colombian cinema that has focused on issues of violence and drug cartels, but the narrative details of the plot reveal a thematic focus that scholarship has not fully explored, that is, the impact of urbanization in everyday life. Linking *El Man* to other films produced since the 1990s, I argue that the notion of space, specifically urban space, needs further exploration and problematization. The chapter has two analytic foci, namely, the effect of parody in the construction of gender in the superhero and the film's thesis on urban renewal and spatial politics, and how these evoke an invisible violence that is sometimes ignored in favor of the spectacular.

Chapter 3 analyzes Ernesto Díaz Espinoza's *Mirageman* (2007) as an allegory of the Pinochet dictatorship and the transition to democracy in Chile. Starring famed Chilean martial artist, Marko Zaror, the film oscillates between kitsch and a dynamic realism to conceptualize the effects of the dictatorship on the psyche of individual Chileans and the collective social body in the late twentieth century. The protagonist, Maco, is traumatized after witnessing the murder of his parents and the rape of his younger brother, Tito, who now is catatonic in a psychiatric facility. A chance encounter that results in saving a television reporter during a home invasion leads Maco to adopt the persona of Mirageman, a crime fighter for the layperson in twenty-first-century Santiago. Parting from theories of allegory vis-à-vis politics and trauma, I argue that the film is a cogent meditation on the effects of state terrorism on the social psyche. Centering my analysis on the development of Maco into a superhero, and Tito as he recovers from the originary trauma of the rape, I suggest that *Mirageman* relocates legal and social debates of the transition to democracy within a genre film that may otherwise be viewed as lighter fare. I conclude the chapter with a section on the protagonist's mask and its ability

to generate affective intensities in the viewer and other diegetic subjects. I extrapolate this argument to a wider corpus of superhero films, arguing that the mask as sartorial accoutrement is emotively and narratologically significant in the crafting of any superhero tale.

Chapter 4 relocates the reader to San Pedro Sula, a city in the north of Honduras that has earned the unflattering moniker of the most violent city in the world due to the proliferation of gang and drug violence in the city. *Chinche Man* (2015) originates in an urban space where unmitigated murder and impunity are an everyday occurrence. Making his debut first in a television skit, then YouTube video, and then finally a feature-length film, *Chinche Man* is—like *Mirageman*—a superhero who defends the rights and livelihoods of citizens downtrodden by drug cartels and police corruption. In this chapter, I correlate details of the film's plot with the murder of the superhero's creator, Igor Padilla, on January 17, 2017. I argue that the sanitized violence of the film (where not a single character is killed onscreen) and the recourse to parody as a narrative mode functions as a salient allegory of the sociocultural milieu of the extradiegetic world—as a sort of chronicle of a death foretold—that saw the targeting of Padilla and other members of his creative staff by local gangs. The chapter includes an analysis of the creation of the character in a television skit, and the use of YouTube as a social media platform to generate popular interest in the project that then coalesces into a film. The chapter concludes with a commentary of Súper H, a real-life superhero who—wearing a luchador mask and the jersey of the country's national soccer team—uses Facebook as a platform to engage the community of San Pedro Sula in social work and to mount a critique of controversially elected president, Juan Orlando Hernández.

In chapter 5, I examine *Capitán Centroamérica*, a production of the YouTube channel Puyaweb based in El Salvador. As in previous sections, I analyze the origin, construct, and politics of the title superhero, in addition to the narrative development of the character vis-à-vis an antagonist, which in this case is organized crime. First, I detail the character's engagement with parody as a narrative mode, contextualizing the protagonist as a variant of Marvel's Captain America, and then examining the superhero's divergent engagement with political ideology. I then study the web series (2011), its emission platform (YouTube), and how this impacts its circulation both within the political frontiers of Central America and its diasporic communities in the United States. I engage with scholarship on mass media, YouTube, and mobile technology (specifically, the idea of

“spreadable media”) to inform this section. My analysis then shifts to the television show, which first aired on national TV in 2013 and was then exported to streaming platforms that cater to a US market in 2017. In the television adaptation, the producers expand the storyline to include more characters and explain the origin story of the Capitán. I analyze the changes that take place in the adaptation to the weekly format (versus the on-demand nature of YouTube), and then anchor both productions and the superhero within current debates in contemporary Central American cultural production.

The book ends with a brief conclusion wherein I mention other films and series that I have not analyzed here or that are currently in production. In tracing the advent of the superhero from origin texts to contemporary manifestations that move across mediums, narratives, and borders, *Capitán Latinoamérica* echoes Denison and Mizsei-Ward’s contention that the superhero today is “part of wider cultural negotiations between globalizing media exchanges and local histories and tastes,” and that “the superhero’s meanings are culturally and contextually dependent . . . [and] often subject to local reinterpretations and remodeling” (Denison and Mizsei-Ward 4). Latin American superheroes, importantly, are unique and merit further study in that they are not simply deployed to defend the status quo, but rather are fashioned and mobilized to critique the contemporary and to lay bare the injustices of systems already in place.