

THE 2017 JAMIE BISHOP MEMORIAL AWARD for an essay on the fantastic written in a language other than English

Winner

David Dalton

“Intenciones enmascaradas en la pantalla plateada. El Santo y el mimetismo imperial” (Masked Intentions on the Silver Screen: El Santo and Imperial Mimicry)¹

Perhaps the most innovative characteristic of so-called “Mexploitation” cinema was its incorporation of *lucha libre* stars, most notably El Santo, into narratives that borrowed heavily from Hollywood science fiction and horror films. Although the juxtaposition of professional wrestlers with B-movies seems odd at first glance, a posthuman reading of El Santo identifies him as the ideal Mexican subject within the discursive framework of post-Revolutionary *mexicanidad*. His mask ties him implicitly to indigenous Mexico while his symbiotic relationship with technology aligns him with the cyborg—and consequently with modernity and *mestizaje*. Following the Revolution, the state asserted *mestizaje* as the “authentic” articulation of Mexicanness by inculcating it in the indigenous population. Thus the superhero identifies with a racial community that, in the words of Homi Bhaba, “mimics” European imperialism. Such discourse is especially clear as El Santo defends (*mestizo*) Mexico against specters of the nation’s past—such as La Llorona and indigenous mummies—who threaten the country from within. The defeat of these monsters highlights *mestizo* attempts to internally colonize and domesticate indigenous cultures. However, despite Mexican *mestizaje*’s attempts to model itself after Western colonialism, these films also show how foreign subjects continue to impose their own imperial projects on the nation. Many of the villains that the cyborg superhero confronts—such as Martians and European mad scientists—represent posthuman, imperial threats to Mexican—particularly *mestizo*—sovereignty. Ultimately, El Santo represents a segment of society that staves off imperialism from the outside even as it asserts its own empire from within.

Finalists

Sylvia Kurlat Ares

“Políticas de lo estético en la ilustración de ciencia ficción. El caso de “Think Blue, Count Two” de Cordwainer Smith.” (Politics of Aesthetics in science fiction illustration. The case of “Think Blue, Count Two” by Cordwainer Smith)²

Juan C. Toledano Redondo & Kaitlin R. Sommerfeld

“Recuerdos que curan: Memoria y ciencia ficción en Chile” (Memories that cure: memory and science fiction in Chile.)³

¹ This essay was published in Spanish in *Alambique* 4.1 (2016)

² This essay is forthcoming in Spanish in *Alambique*

³ This essay was published in Spanish in *Alambique* 3.1 (2015)