

Monstrous Heroes, Epic Monsters: A Contemporary Graphic Adaptation of *Beowulf*

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Abstract

Beowulf by Santiago García and David Rubín stands out among the many graphic adaptations of the medieval heroic poem on account of its length, insight and art. There is a cultural translation that adapts medieval to postmodern tropes. This article examines how their reading brings closer the character of the medieval hero with the contemporary superhero. It also explores how both creators subvert the tropes of the hero and the monster in terms of graphic treatment and storyline, whether approaching original themes under a new light—such as guilt—or hybridizing monstrous bodies and aligning them with humans.

Keywords: Beowulf, hero, superhero, monster, hybridity, abjection, graphic adaptation, cultural translation, monomyth, guilt.

1. Introduction

The hero and their countless representations, interpretations, revisitations and adaptations have been a constant presence in all cultures throughout history. Whether medieval recreations, fantasy warriors, or postmodern superheroes, heroes populate the contemporary screens in films, games and TV series releases. No doubt, they often bear little resemblance with the literary heroes of yore, but Herakles, Odysseus or King Arthur still attract the attention of contemporary creators. Each creator, especially if they belong to a different generation, is bound to read the classics under a new light, by adding or suppressing different layers of meaning to the original source. They read the classic and translate it to their own creative universe, taming it for their own purposes. This adaptation process is not free of tensions, but these might become a creative force that not only hails the worth of the original, but also founds a remarkable cultural product in its own right.

This article explores Santiago García and David Rubín's *Beowulf* (2013, 2018), a graphic adaptation of one of the most renowned heroic poems of the medieval times, written in the West-Saxon dialect presumably between the middle of the seventh and the end of the tenth century. García and Rubín join the long list of creators who have approached and adapted the original poem to different media—novels, animation and real action films, comic books and videogames.

Santiago García based his script directly on Seamus Heaney's translation of the Old English poem (*Beowulf* 2000). In a way, Heaney's translation already adapts the original to his own cultural background by including many words of Irish origin, a Celtic language unrelated to Old English. For Heaney, this was an opportunity to avoid the cultural determinism that considered English and Irish antagonistic tongues (xxiv). In

turn, García adapted Heaney's text to his Spanish script, and together with David Rubín, they transferred that script to a different medium, the comic, turning it into a graphic novel. Recently, their work has been translated into English and was nominated to the 2018 Eisner Awards in the category of Best Adaptation from Another Medium. Through this journey of translations and adaptations, *Beowulf* becomes a cultural translation, a contemporary reading of the Germanic tradition speckled with Christian references of the original. Thus, the original's "mythic potency" (Heaney, xii) is adapted for a comic readership that is very familiar with monsters and heroes, more specifically their postmodern version, superheroes.

As this article shows, Rubín and García's taming of this literary beast, directly based on Heaney's version, articulates an interesting reading of the original. First, by highlighting a secondary theme of the poem—guilt—and turning it into the main conflict of the story and then blurring the boundaries between heroes and monsters through Rubín's graphic treatment of flesh. By doing so, García and Rubín alter the fixed duality of good versus evil addressed in most adaptations of the heroic poem, since heroes become slightly monstrous and monsters moderately human in their version.

To carry this double analysis, García and Rubín's *Beowulf* is examined through the general lens of adaptation studies, but using theoretical tools from two different fields: myth criticism to approach Beowulf as a hero, with his connection to the superhero in the graphic novel, and postcolonial theory to discuss the monsters' hybridity. This comparative perspective creates a double approach to the authors' reading of the story, highlighting the dimension added to the figure of the monster and to the myth of the hero, with a focus on the contemporary figure of the superhero.

2. Adapting / Appropriating / Translating *Beowulf*

Originally published in Spain in 2013, Santiago García and David Rubín's version of the heroic poem is a significant example of the many lives of a classic. In the last decades, *Beowulf* has been often approached as poem-to-film and poem-to-videogame adaptations. It has also been adapted and appropriated profusely in a comic format.¹ Following Julie Sanders' distinction, while adaptation "signals a relationship with an informing source text or original" (35), appropriation "frequently affects a more decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain" (35). To the latter category correspond the versions that alternatively made Beowulf a Christian hero: Enrico Basari's Italian *Beowulf: Leggenda cristiana della antica Danimarca* (1940-1955)—a warrior fighting against monsters, dragons, vampires and even aliens; Michael Uslan and Ricardo Villamonte's *Beowulf, Dragon-Slayer* (1975)—an immortal being who helps the police with cases involving supernatural creatures; Brian Augustyn's *Beowulf* (2005-2006)—or a cyberpunk fighter in manga-style; and David Hutchison's *Beowulf* (2006).

The remaining comic versions are transcultural adaptations (Hutcheon, 145) that follow the plot of the poem to a greater or lesser extent: Jerry Bingham's *Beowulf* (1984), with a Conan look, or Francis Lombardi and Kevin Altieri's *A Different Shade of Gray* (2003), a short morality tale based on Beowulf and Wiglaf. Gareth Hinds' *Beowulf* (2002) is the only version in English language with a clear intention to adapt the content of the original poem to the visual format. However, all those versions are much shorter and technically less complex than Rubín and García's *Beowulf* and "far tamer, both in violence and creative exploration," according to reviews on the recent English translation of the Spanish comic published by Image Comics (Murel 2018).

Santiago García indicates that his first contact with *Beowulf* was through an illustrated version by Alice and Martin Provensen included in a volume on myths and legends for children (*Mitos y Leyendas* 1968). According to the author, the adaptation of the classic became an organic process because it was ingrained in his imagination in his early years. After approaching the poem through a graphic adaptation, years later he would read different comic adaptations, and finally, Heaney's translation.²

In any case, García's intention was not to transfer the heroic poem to the comic literally looking for a supposed objectivity, but to elaborate a new reading together with the illustrator, reinterpreting plot, characters and themes. At the same time, we can consider García and Rubín's *Beowulf* a cultural translation, a term used in social anthropology and defined by Talal Asad as a task, for an anthropologist, to transfer not only the literal meaning of a message and its historic context, but the cultural fact itself. Therefore, for Asad, "to translate culture the anthropologist must first read and then reinscribe the implicit meanings that lie beneath / within / beyond" (160). In this way, García and Rubín's cultural translation reactivates the medieval heroic poem through a transcultural adaptation that works at a linguistic, stylistic, thematic and visual level.

3. Heroes and Superheroes: A Cultural Translation of the Monomyth

In contemporary imagination, heroes are intrinsically associated with comics. Or, more specifically, with superheroes, their postmodern heirs, who have become almost indistinguishable in Postmodernism, after the cultural turn that has eroded the traditional limits becomes the so-called high culture and mass or pop culture (Jameson 1998). Different authors (Morrison 2011, Reynolds 1994) have pointed out that superheroes have created a contemporary mythology, a new cosmogony populated by its own gods, heroes and their nemeses, ruled by its own rules and recipient of a specific iconography.

Whether adaptations or appropriations, all poem-to-comic reinventions of *Beowulf* are examples of how the hero "has become part of the wider cultural consciousness" (Ndalianis, 1). In addition, they also show the potential for assimilation inherent to comic culture and how authors have found inspiration in different mythological sources. For instance, Grant Morrison acknowledges that, like many other comic artists, he aimed at "re-creating the superhero in terms of medieval quest allegories" (301). Jack "King" Kirby, the creator of many of the American superheroes in the 1940s, draws on Hebrew scriptures and epic mythology (Morrison, 38). Also, García has noted the connection between *The Iliad* and many of the "themes, motifs and narrative mechanisms of the Marvel universe" (2017).³ Umberto Eco compares superhero comics to myths in "The Myth of Superman" and Stan Lee used to compare his comics to the foundation of a modern mythology (Somigli, 293).

As mentioned above, García became fascinated with the Provensens' illustrated adaptation of *Beowulf* when he was a child, when he started to read superhero comics. In fact, he was impressed by their characterization of a hero, "because I found him very close to the profile of modern superheroes" (2017).⁴ This reception of the hero and his connection to the superhero illustrates how "different knowing audiences bring different information to their interpretations of adaptations" (Hutcheon, 125). In his script for *Beowulf*, García appropriates the mythical concept of the medieval hero. Medieval heroes are brave individuals "who risks life and limb to protect both their honor and that of their people" (Allen, 36). However, such heroic ethos is defined by the hero's ability to

live harmoniously with both the laws and norms of society (Napierkowski, 503). Although contemporary medievalism has assimilated attributes such as honor and bravery in its recreation of medieval heroes, it has frequently ignored this kingship ideal to which Napierkowski refers. García is not an exception, since he transfers heroic values such as loyalty and courage to his perception of the modern superhero, but avoids references to kingship and leadership instruction. In his assimilation of the modern superhero and the medieval hero, García added a conscious “action tone” at a graphic level throughout the comic. This is a similar tone of the superhero genre, formerly developed by Rubín in *The Hero* (2015), a contemporary rereading of The Twelve Labors of Heracles. This obviously implies numerous action scenes—frequently mute—, accelerated sequences, inset panels offering alternative perspectives and details, and onomatopoeias.

In terms of language and style, García’s *Beowulf* is a meticulous adaptation of the language of the classic. In fact, he used as a source text Seamus Heaney’s translation and certain passages are direct translations into Spanish. He also translated certain kennings, descriptive phrases which present a metaphoric association, like “camino de la ballena” (García and Rubín, 25), a translation of “whale-road” (Heaney, l.20) to refer to the sea.⁵ But he also introduced new ones, like “agua de la espada,” literally *water of the sword*, in allusion to blood, that did not appear on the original. Either way, García incorporates a literary device that resounds with the implicit meanings of the originals. Such faithfulness to the stylistic devices and language of the heroic poem was born out of García’s fascination with the language of the Nordic sagas that he discovered through Jorge Luis Borges’ essays;⁶ those kennings “bear such an excessive poetic charge that they transmit more than images, an epic, timeless feeling that turn the poem into a symbolic, and therefore, eternal representation, still valid for contemporary readers” (2017).⁷

García also maintains the same values attached to Germanic culture. *Beowulf* illustrates a heroic code of honor that Germanic society highly valued, characterized by honor, loyalty, courage and fearlessness. Those attributes still appeal to popular culture in the 21st century and they are closely associated with the figure of the superhero.

Many comic scholars have established a parallelism between the path of a traditional hero and a modern superhero (Miettien 2012, Garrett 2008, Lang and Trimble 1988). As established by Joseph Campbell in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (2004 [1949]), there is a common mythological structure in the journey undertaken by any archetypal hero. The original *Beowulf* is no exception to the monomyth and the three stages of a hero’s quest are very evident: “a separation from the world, a penetration to some source of power, and a life-enhancing return” (2004, 33). Regarding the first stage, Beowulf leaves Geatland and comes to the aid of the Scyldings; at the second stage, he defeats Grendel and his mother and then, at the last stage, returns to the Geats as king to meet his fate fifty years later, after slaying the dragon that threatens his people.

According to the theory of the monomyth, the hero’s path is performative: the self is undone and redone by leaving the familiar behind and undergoing a series of adventures. For Campbell: “The usual hero adventure begins with someone from whom something has been taken, or who feels there is something lacking in the normal experience available or permitted to the members of society” (1991, 123). But the original Beowulf does not specify the reasons of his departure beyond the fact that the news of the problems “had reached me at home” (Heaney, l.411). Perhaps the anonymous poet did not need to

emphasize a certain code of solidarity and bravery that all his readers might know (Albertson, 2). Furthermore, the hero's return becomes a bitter experience with time: as an old king, he needs to defeat the last monster to protect his people, but, abandoned by his men in the final hour, both hero and dragon perish in the fight.

Although Rubín and García adapt their comic to the monomyth's cycle, their reading attempts to interpret what prompts the hero to start his journey and to justify the bitterness of the reintegration phase. García consciously adds a different interpretation to the original "call to epic" (2017), a new layer of meaning. He wants to dig into the character's personality and he hides in the pages of this graphic novel an implicit identity conflict: García's Beowulf comes to the rescue not for glory or solidarity, but because of guilt.⁸ In their comic, García and Rubín emphasize an episode that might pass unnoticed to the reader when approaching the poem for the first time: the story of Breca's death, Beowulf's childhood friend. Beowulf tells the story of their swimming contest and how his companion perished in the waves. García and Rubín incorporated this passage in their work with most of the details from the original and then decided to bring it back in the last pages, before the old hero meets the dragon and his final fate. "¿Queréis saber la verdadera historia de Breca?" [Do you want to know the true story about Breca?], he asks, while he munches on some cherries that bear a strong resemblance with torn flesh (142-143).

Furthermore, García and Rubín also bring forward guilt, a theme that was present in the original.⁹ At first sight, guilt seems at odds with the Germanic warrior code. As different scholars have pointed out (Clark 1998, Robinson 1985, Jones 1963), in cultural terms the poem belongs to a world in which honor is the reward for right conduct and shame the punishment for wrong deeds. According to Robinson, shame culture did not disappear with the conversion to Christianity, but guilt culture was superimposed to shame culture (Robinson, 119). The Christian poet might have used Beowulf's "unaccustomed anxiety and gloom" (Heaney, l. 2332) before facing the dragon "as evidence for the hero's sense of guilt, an anachronistic imposition of the poet's culture on the poem's heroic (and pagan) world" (Clark, 285).

While Clark points at the possibility that Beowulf's guilt derives from the threat the dragon presents to his honor after raiding his kingdom (285-286), García and Rubín fill in the blanks with an alternative explanation for his dark thoughts, by presenting a gloomy Beowulf in his final hour and introducing a second reference to the history of Breca, hinting at the role played by Beowulf in the episode. The episode also bears a thematic resemblance with superhero universes, in which guilt is ever-present: Batman, Spiderman, Superman and, specially, Captain America (Weiner, 90), are characters riddled with guilt that, at a certain point in their narrative arcs, suffer trauma over the loss of a sidekick, a friend or a family member, and blame themselves for their passive or active participation in that loss.

García and Rubín's reading of the poem casts a new light on the aging hero, who is no longer the selfless warrior, but an old man propelled by guilt after having an active part in the death of his friend, becoming a hero and a traitor at the same time. By including a new reference to Breca in the last part of the story, García and Rubín highlight how Beowulf's past has haunted his glory, suggesting that the hero is not perfect after all. The statement "los monstruos nunca se acaban" [monsters never disappear] (124), which opens the third section of the graphic novel and presents an old Beowulf on his throne, somberly looking down, depicted in cold tones, has then a double interpretation:

either the hero's task is never-ending and therefore he is bound to fail in protecting his people, or the monster lurks within the hero and guilt prevents him from savoring glory.

4. Hybrid Monsters and Abject Bodies

Anthony Burgess defined *Beowulf* through a very visual language: "A poem whose grim music is the snapping of fangs, the crunching of bones, and whose color is the grey of the northern winter, shot by the red of blood" (18). García and Rubín may as well have had this image in mind while working on their comic. David Rubín uses different shades of red on most of the pages, leaving whites and greys for landscapes and a greenish red for Grendel's underwater lair. Bodies and body parts, whether close-ups or wider frames, populate the pages. Wine and half eaten food strongly resemble blood and gore, while eating men remind us of Burgess' "snapping of fangs" (18). This crammed style and visceral images convey a claustrophobic, sinister atmosphere to the graphic novel that adapts the original tone and gloomy vocabulary.

The presence of the three monsters stands out in the graphic novel, but such monsters already occupied a prevalent position in the original, according to J.R.R. Tolkien: "[Southern mythology does not have] the monsters in the center — as they are in *Beowulf* to the astonishment of the critics. But such horrors cannot be left permanently unexplained, lurking on the outer edges" (29). Tolkien assumed that the anonymous poet had tried to exorcise the fear of monsters by invoking them and giving them prominence. García agrees with Tolkien and considers monsters as the most fascinating aspect of the classic, the differentiating factor that distinguishes *Beowulf* from epic poems like *Mio Cid* (García 2013). Although their presence is undeniable, the central aspect of these creatures is ambiguous. In the poem, they are peripheral subjects that lurk on the "phantasmal boundaries" (Heaney, xv) of civilized society. Appropriately, Grendel is described in the poem as a *mearcstapa*, or "border-stepper" (l. 103), a marauder that haunts the border of human spaces. The fact that inner spaces and outer spaces are visually differentiated in the comic is also "a meditation on our physical vulnerability to the environment (the frigid and unforgiving landscape is emphasized) and to inexplicable enemies" (Forni, 112).

Both the heroic poem and comic emphasize the fact that Grendel's hatred is the result of envy: "It harrowed him / to hear the din of the loud banquet / every day in the hall, the harp being struck / and the clear song of a skilled poet" (l.85-90). Thus, Grendel envies the fraternity, the merry coexistence of human beings at the mead hall, the center of civilization in Germanic societies. The existence of a center from which he is excluded is what makes him a marginal figure, the Other. A creature torn from a civilization that he covets and despises at the same time. A familiar Other all the same, since the monster is Cain's spawn, and therefore human in origin.

Medieval studies have recently turned their attention to postcolonial theory (Cohen 2000, Joy and Ramsey 2006, Kabir and Williams 2005), by suggesting its application to "any time or place where one social group dominates another" (Cohen, 3, cited in Warren). Histories of exploitation, social antagonism and differences based on religion, culture or ethnicity indeed plagued medieval societies. According to Cohen, the "hybrid, uncanny bodies" of medieval monsters, such as giants, "suggest that even if the period is alluringly strange, it is at the same time discomfortingly familiar" (5). Cohen explains that "in the medieval occidental imaginary, the category admixture that hybridity represents is almost always conjoined with monstrousness" (85). Therefore, the postcolonial notion

of hybridity aptly applies to monstrous bodies, familiar and yet strange, byproducts of contact zones between cultures.

The original *Beowulf* can be approached from a postcolonial perspective, with Grendel and Grendel's mother as hybrids forced to occupy the margins of civilized society, since "marginality unintentionally reifies centrality because it is the center that creates the condition of marginality" (Ashcroft et al., 154). García and Rubín's graphic novel emphasizes this approach to hybridity. While García admits that there is an identification between the hero and the monster at a political level (García 2017), this identification works especially at the graphic level. Rubín's art blurs the boundaries between monstrous bodies and human bodies—chainmail becomes scales, teeth become swords, and diverse objects look like parts of dismembered bodies—, underlining an identification that is not as noticeable in the original. The aforementioned crammed style not only conveys a claustrophobic atmosphere, but also an eerie identification between beasts and humans, suggested already in the cover, where Grendel and Beowulf's heads appear superimposed.

For Cohen, "Medieval hybridity is an impudent, relentlessly embodied phenomenon that brings together in a conflictual, 'unnatural' union of races (*genera*) [...]. Medieval hybridity is inherently monstrous" (89). By declaring "mi carne no es festín de monstruos" (72), a direct translation of "my flesh is not for feasting on" (Heaney, 1.562), García and Rubín's *Beowulf* rejects any association with monsters at a bodily level.

Nonetheless, the body connection is clear: in the eyes of Grendel and his mother, humans are naked, skinless, fleshy creatures. Grendel and his mother are represented in a similar fashion: raw, powerful humanoids made of muscle, blood and bones. Despite their hatred for humans (on account of his envy, in Grendel's case, and on account of revenge, in his mother's), they resemble each other. Death only emphasizes this closeness, since dead flesh makes them uniform and almost undistinguishable. Revealingly, García and Rubín dramatize the finding of Aeschere's head, massacred by Grendel's mother, and the mother holding her son's head (90). This parallelism implies that grieving and pain are not exclusively human feelings, but also experienced by those hybrid creatures, furthering their connection with the humans. This prevalence of fleshy presences and dismembered bodies bring into focus the concept of abjection. For Julia Kristeva, abjection is the human reaction to a breakdown in meaning caused by the loss of the distinction between self and other or between object and subject (Kristeva, 1-10). A clear example of abjection is the horror or vomit evoked by corpses, which reminds the spectator of his or her own death. The presence of monstrous hybrids also challenges the perception of the self, pointing at a connection that "lies there, quite close, but it cannot be assimilated. It beseeches, worries, and fascinates desire, which, nevertheless, does not let itself be seduced" (Kristeva, 1).

Desire is powerfully intertwined with the notion of abjection and otherness in the comic. When Grendel attacks Heorot at night, he approaches Beowulf in the manner of a succubus; Grendel sexually assaults Beowulf in his sleep, feeling aroused at the sight of his naked body, with a noticeable look of longing in his face. Forni states that this is the only adaptation that has added a sexual dimension to Grendel and Beowulf's encounter (113). What do authors imply by this "unnatural" interrupted union? There are several possibilities; either Grendel is attracted to Beowulf but his only way to interact with him is through violence and rape, or he is attempting to de-other himself through an intimate contact. Furthermore, this scene could function as a visual metaphor

of the body as the ultimate battlefield, whether monstrous or human, or even as a “wry commentary on our own prurient attraction to the violence” (Forni, 113). In either case, Beowulf’s sense of abjection at the sight of an aroused Grendel is evident and he reacts by physically attacking him. They embrace in a fierce battle that ends up with a mortally wounded Grendel.

García maintains that the scene’s sexual tone is part of their contemporary reading; they never tried to reproduce the medieval register, since it would have been impossible to connect with medieval mentality and interpretation of the text. “That the erotic hint of the battle was present or not in the original is irrelevant to our version because we are not trying to understand men and women of yore but trying to understand ourselves” (2017).¹⁰

Apart from the sexual tone of this abject seduction, the prevalence of dismembered bodies, open wounds, severed muscles, blood and other body fluids such as semen and sweat are also manifestations of the abject in the comic. The fact that banners, carpets, wine, food and even water also resemble blood in terms of color and graphic treatment increases this sense of abjection. Rubín’s graphic style, highly influenced by Jack Kirby’s superheroes, emphasizes the abject by embedding smaller panels into larger ones. This technique helps to recreate the characters’ sensory world and allows multiple perspectives (Murel 2018). Those insets are frequently close-ups of gory elements that are difficult to assign. Does that drop of blood belong to man or monster? Is that liquid wine or blood? Is that a brain fragment or part of a monstrous body? At the end, Beowulf’s body and the dragon’s body, the last monster, become almost undistinguishable in their last fight: red against red, flesh against flesh. No doubt, Rubín’s anatomic landscapes function as a mechanism of identification that blurs the boundaries between human and monsters by mingling their abject bodies. As such, it paves the way for a revisionist interpretation of the poem: if bodies are undistinguishable, whose body is being torn? Whose suffering is greater? The identification man/monster reveals how in their adaptation the authors avoid abjection to demarcate the Other but make use of the abject to show how these marginal creatures resemble human beings in their driving forces: hatred, envy, vengeance and survival.

5. Conclusions

García and Rubín succeed in taming *Beowulf*, offering a fresh reading as a result of a productive conflict with the original. The adaptation of this heroic poem for contemporary readers acquainted with superhero comics becomes a cultural translation: from one language into another (West-Saxon, via Heaney’s English with Irish overtones, into Spanish); from Medieval Germanic culture into a postmodern Western culture; from a medium such as Old English poetry into the comic medium. As such, it provides an ambiguous reading of the original at the graphic level, and as a reactivation and revision of the original themes and language, at the script level. While Rubín questions the notions of margins/center and the perception of same/other through his anatomic landscapes, García challenges the medieval notion of heroism and reinterprets Beowulf’s last decision to fight the dragon: guilt is the driving force of the character, not glory or altruism.

While older graphic versions usually draw on the medieval tropes of the warrior and the monster, García and Rubín’s *Beowulf* subverts these stereotypes and the different binary oppositions associated with them—good/evil; civilization/savagery; honor/

vileness; light/darkness—by blurring the boundaries between monsters and heroes. The question implicit in the monomyth—What makes a hero a hero? —is connected to this revisionist project. Not only the journey creates a hero, but also the monsters, since there would be no heroes without them. In a similar way, what makes a monster a monster is a feeling of abjection that pushes these creatures to the margins. In their mutual exclusion, both need each other: for there to be heroes, there must be monsters and vice versa, a circle that is maintained throughout superhero culture. With their *Beowulf*, García and Rubín add a contemporary dimension to the myth of the hero as someone slightly monstrous, while their monsters retain a certain human quality.

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Notes

- ¹ For more information on *Beowulf*'s comic adaptations, see Gómez Calderón (2007), Tondro (2015) and Forni (2018). See also Bosomworth's website "Beowulf in 2D," devoted to the graphic adaptations of the heroic poem.
- ² For more information on adaptation as cultural translation, see Porras Sánchez (2018).
- ³ "Leyendo de adulto *La Ilíada* he descubierto que sus conexiones con los temas, conceptos y mecanismos narrativos del Universo Marvel son muy numerosos" (García 2017). Most of García statements come from an interview with the author (García 2017). The interview was carried out in Spanish. I include the Spanish original in the footnotes, and my translation as in-text quotations.
- ⁴ "Beowulf me impresionaba más porque descubrí en él una cercanía mayor con el perfil del superhéroe moderno" (García 2017).
- ⁵ Unfortunately, the translation by Stone and Keatingue fails to maintain the original kennings previously translated by Heaney from the West-Saxon that García had later translated into Spanish for the Spanish edition of the graphic novel. Since this translation does not take Heaney's text into consideration as the source text of the graphic novel, I have maintained the references to the Spanish version.
- ⁶ García is probably referring to *Las Kenningar* (1933) and the prologue to the volume of poetry *Literaturas Germánicas Medievales* (1965).
- ⁷ "Esas metáforas descomunales tipo 'el camino de la ballena' o 'el agua de la espada', etc., que poseen un sentido poético tan excesivo transmiten algo más que imágenes, transmiten un sentimiento épico y atemporal que proyecta la obra a un ámbito donde se convierte en una representación simbólica y por tanto eterna, por tanto todavía válida para nosotros" (García 2017).
- ⁸ "Creo que nuestro *Beowulf* en cierta manera 'soluciona' [la llamada a la épica] dando una motivación a Beowulf a través del conflicto de identidad que dejamos enterrado en sus páginas, planteando una variante que no es explícita pero que algún lector avezado podría llegar a descubrir algún día, y que explicaría que Beowulf acude al rescate de los skyldingos no tanto porque desee la gloria como porque le impulsa la culpa" (García 2017).
- ⁹ García has suggested that he might have been influenced by Jorge Luis Borges' "Theme of the Traitor and the Hero" (1944) and "The South" (1953) while looking for *Beowulf*'s inner conflict.

¹⁰ "Intentamos conectarlo con el público de nuestra época. En eso consiste hacerlo 'vigente' y eso es lo que le da la condición de 'atemporalidad' propia de un clásico. Y ahí es donde surgen aparentes desviaciones como ese matiz erótico de la batalla. Que estuviera o no presente en el original es irrelevante para nuestra versión porque no estamos intentando entender a los hombres y mujeres de entonces, sino que estamos intentando entendernos a nosotros" (García 2017).

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