

**BREAKING
BOUNDARIES AND
DISLOCATING MYTHS
IN ÁLVARO
CUNQUEIRO'S
"FUNCIÓN DE ROMEO E
XULIETA, FAMOSOS
NAMORADOS" (1956): A
GALICIAN ADAPTATION
OF SHAKESPEARE'S
ROMEO AND JULIET IN
THE 20TH CENTURY⁷³**

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Abstract

Álvaro Cunqueiro's treatment of space is subtler than critics have until very recently believed it to be. Creating a mythical Atlantic realm, where Galicia is placed at the same level as Brittany or Ireland, has proved of great importance to intellectuals, including Cunqueiro, who stand opposed to the cultural

Resumen

El tratamiento del espacio en Álvaro Cunqueiro siempre ha sido más sutil de lo que la crítica ha reconocido hasta hace muy poco. La creación de una esfera mítica atlántica, en la que Galicia se sitúa al mismo nivel que la Bretaña Francesa o Irlanda, ha demostrado ser de gran importancia para aquellos intelectuales que se han posicionado contra la dominación cultural

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domination of the Mediterranean. This is posed in the author's Galician adaptation of the Shakespearean original, *Romeo and Juliet*, alongside the negation of a common space for communication. In that sense, the present analysis shows that Cunqueiro's adaptation is essential in denouncing cultural repression in peripheral Galicia, though critics have hitherto paid little attention to this and rather have tended to demonise the author's attitude towards evasive literature, and accuse him of an inability to understanding the suffering of the Galician community under Francoism. Criticism should now encourage a second reading of Cunqueiro's Shakespearean adaptations in terms of geographical, cultural, and symbolic location.

Key Words: Shakespeare, Cunqueiro, Romeo, Juliet, dislocating myths, Comparative literature, Reception Studies.

del Mediterráneo, Cunqueiro entre ellos. Esta cuestión se plantea en la adaptación gallega del autor de la versión *Romeo y Julieta* de William Shakespeare, además de la negación de un espacio común para la comunicación. En ese sentido, el presente análisis muestra cómo la adaptación de Cunqueiro es esencial en el proceso de denuncia contra la represión cultural en el sistema periférico gallego. Todo ello sumado a la falta de atención prestada por la crítica a la obra y la demonización del autor y su literatura evasiva, como supuesta falta de sensibilidad ante los problemas de la comunidad gallega durante el Franquismo. Con esta propuesta, se pretende que la crítica en una segunda lectura de las adaptaciones shakesperianas de Cunqueiro advierta el valor del tratamiento espacial geográfico, cultural y simbólico en la mencionada obra como catalizador de una denuncia social velada.

Palabras clave: Shakespeare, Cunqueiro, Romeo, Julieta, traslación, mitos, Literatura comparada, Estudios de Recepción.

Álvaro Cunqueiro (1911-1981), one of the foremost writers of twentieth-century Galician literature, was an exceptionally prolific author and his published works include a great deal of poetry, essays, translations, drama and fiction. His accomplishments as a linguist allowed him to explore a wide variety of foreign literatures and thus his work is also characterised by an easy familiarity with classic literature. He is often considered as a re-maker of ancient myths for modern times.⁷⁴ Writing in both Galician and Castilian, he also had a long career as a journalist in Madrid and in his native Galicia. Many of the innovative collaborations that Cunqueiro wrote for newspapers and cultural magazines over the years have somehow related to the Shakespearean

⁷⁴ Cunqueiro's works include *Merlín e familia* (*Merlin and Company*) (1955), *Crónicas do Sochantre* (*Chronicles of the Subchantor*) (1956), *O incerto Señor Don Hamlet: Príncipe de Dinamarca* (*The Uncertain Don Hamlet, Prince of Denmark*) (1958), *Las mocedades de Ulises* (*The Boyhood Deeds of Ulysses*) (1960), *Un hombre que se parecía a Orestes* (*A Man Who Looked Like Orestes*) (1969), *El año del cometa* (*The Year of the Comet*) (1974).

tradition. This is true in the case of *The Uncertain Don Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* or the essay “As mil caras de Shakespeare” (The Thousand Faces of Shakespeare), an extensive essay on the life and works of William Shakespeare published in *Grial* (1964).⁷⁵ Yet the relationship that Cunqueiro established with the English speaking cultures should not be considered as a unique occurrence within twentieth-century Galician literature during the Spanish post-Civil War period. In fact, Cunqueiro inherited Celticism in Galicia, a phenomenon which was established well into the 18th century, as demonstrated by the interest shown by numerous Galician writers and intellectuals over the years.⁷⁶ A phenomenon so deeply rooted in Galician culture that it even features in the Galician anthem, *Os Pinos (The Pines)* written by Eduardo Pondal and Pascual Veiga in 1890.⁷⁷

After the end of the war in 1939, Franco’s Spanish nationalism promoted a unitary national identity through the suppression of Spain’s cultural diversity. All cultural activities were subject to censorship and many of them were plainly forbidden, quite often rather erratically so. Linguistic policies were also employed in an attempt to establish national homogeneity. Franco’s regime promoted Spanish and marginalised peripheral languages such as Catalan, Galician, and Euskera. The use of languages other than Spanish was forbidden in official contexts such as in schools, advertising, or road and shop signs. Publications in peripheral languages were generally limited too. This was the situation throughout the forties and, to a lesser extent, during the fifties but, during the 1960s, with the arrival of TV sets, the economic agreement of Franco’s regime with the United States and the first steps towards a globalised world allowed a certain cultural openness on the peninsula, which was also mirrored in the non-Castilian Spanish cultures. Their languages were now freely spoken, written, and performed although they were never accorded official status. But it is also important to note that in this sense, once the totalitarian states that initially supported Franco in Spain disappeared with the fall of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, different laws, merely aesthetic, were passed in

⁷⁵ Although these two works are especially representative of William Shakespeare in Cunqueiro, many other contributions published in the Galician press for several decades exemplify the prolific relationship between the English and the Galician writer. See Jarazo and Domínguez (2010).

⁷⁶ This volume provides information to the non-informed reader about the reception of British and Irish writers in Spain, with a specific chapter dedicated to Galicia (De Toro Santos and Clark 2007).

⁷⁷ De Toro Santos (2007). This book provides extended knowledge on the influence of Irish culture in Galicia.

order to promote an appearance of normality within the Spanish state. This is the case of the Referendum Act or the Law of Succession.⁷⁸

Linguistic repression also resulted in attempts towards the preservation of the Galician language and culture by those in exile: people in the periphery had to resort to foreign media such as the BBC for news about their own community broadcast in their mother tongue. Many Galician intellectuals had been forced into exile by the regime, the Galician language had been prohibited and, as the *BBC Year Book* states: “Since the war, the chief demand of the Spanish audience of the BBC has been for more news and comment about Spain; one of the ways of endeavouring to meet this demand has been the introduction of a weekly series of Spain regional programmes, a different part of Spain covered in each” (*BBC Year Book* 1948:125-6). From 1947 to 1956 Galician people had the chance to tune in the English BBC to listen to programmes about Galicia which were broadcast in the Galician language despite Franco’s censorship. Needless to say, the Spanish media had always been controlled by the regime for propagandistic purposes.

Most of this cultural and literary reception in Galicia of the British, Irish and North American traditions could not be understood without the help of Plácido Castro.⁷⁹ Though condemned to censorship and silence and living in exile in the United Kingdom until 1956, Castro would fight from abroad against Franco’s repression. He assumed the role of universalising Galician culture through two cultural landmarks: his BBC radio broadcast series on Galicia, presented exclusively in the Galician language (1947-1956), and the publication of the book *Poesía inglesa e francesa vertida ao galego* (English and French poetry translated into Galician) (1949). Due to Castro’s radio broadcasting, Galician tradition was more alive than ever and it was better known abroad than

⁷⁸ See J. Candela Peña (1953), and the laws edited in González-Ares (1999). As far as censorship is concerned, Carlos Barrera mentions that “between 1962 and 1966 Spain experienced an increased press freedom. Fraga brought new life to the Ministry of Information and decisively addressed the need to bury the outdated and anachronistic press law of 1938 and replace it by a more liberal one” (Barrera 1995:88). Quotations in this article have been translated by the authors, unless otherwise specified.

⁷⁹ Plácido Ramón Castro del Río (1902-1967), born in Corcubión, moved at six years old to live in Scotland, and attended the School of Scarborough, Glasgow. Castro, from an early age, joined the political struggle of the Galician front during the Second Spanish Republic. Arising from his interest in the Irish model, he wrote “Homesickness and art in the Celtic sphere” (1928), and also several articles and literary translations that connect the Galician cultural literary tradition with the Scottish and Irish traditions, such as “Irish sighs” (1974) or “Remembering Robert Burns” (1965). As a political correspondent on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, he also published many articles and translations that provide the basis of Cunqueiro’s passion for Celticism and Anglophilia. See Jarazo’s “Plácido Castro e o xornalismo galego [...]” (2010).

it was in Spain.⁸⁰ Exile therefore gave place to a Galician cultural space beyond the borders of the physical Galician territory which was indeed an impossible space within the geographical limits of Galicia. The British media thus became a means to transmit a foreign culture which was consumed in Galicia and in England by uninformed Galician citizens both at home and in exile. The difference is based on the spatial alienation that allows the exile access to first-hand information from home, whereas those at home need to learn of themselves through a foreign medium (Rouse 1991:13). Plácido Castro must be conceived therefore as one of the pioneering Galician journalists and translators of the 20th century, who was actively supporting Galician culture from a position of exile. Plácido Castro constitutes, in the work of Álvaro Cunqueiro, a unique reference point, as Cunqueiro owes much of his professional activity, both as a journalist and as a translator, to his predecessor.⁸¹

As for this generation and its predecessors, constructing Galician identity under Celtic origins allowed them to differentiate themselves from the Mediterranean influence of the Spanish State. They established cultural and literary connections with Ireland as much as with other Celtic nations such as Cornwall, Brittany, Wales or Scotland, while the United States of America and the United Kingdom were also considered relevant sources of information. This new spatial creation, firstly acknowledged from Celticism, is essential in understanding firstly, Cunqueiro's early publications such as *Merlin and Company* or *Chronicles of the Subchantor*, derived from the traditional connections amongst the so-called Celtic communities. During these years, Ireland became the main object of affection of Celtic followers such as *Xeración Nós* (We generation – Sinn Féin) and *Irmandades da Fala* (The Language Brotherhood). A varied range of periodicals at the beginning of the twentieth century such as *A Nosa Terra* and *Nós* would accentuate the relationship between Galicia and Ireland. McKevitt explains that this interest could be based on the magnificent Irish culture, but also on the political struggle and final independence of the present Republic:

For *Irmandades da Fala* and *Xeración Nós*, the parallels between Ireland and Galicia were significant. They included the colonization and repression by a neighboring country, the precarious status of the mother language, the revival of interest in culture and the need for its preservation, the loss of natives due to emigration, a common faith in Catholicism, and struggle for independence. The Galician intellectuals identified with the Irish who, like themselves, were

⁸⁰ The work *Galicia desde Londres (Galicia from London)*, by Antonio Toro Raul Santos is a must read for those who wish to deepen in their understanding of these years in the life of Plácido Castro.

⁸¹ For more information on the professional relationship between Castro and Cunqueiro, see Jarazo (2009).

a peripheral European culture struggling for their own cultural and national identity. Consequently, the subject of Ireland and the Irish became an obligatory and ideologically imperative reference. (2006:10)

This imperative reference, in McKevitt's words, represented only a first stage in Cunqueiro's literary career. Cunqueiro became disillusioned with Celticism during the Civil War, while the theses which attempted to show the proximity of the Galician community to the Celtic communities were increasingly refuted in society and among intellectuals of the time. As a result of this change of mentality, ardent Celticism was even criticized by those who had previously defended it.⁸² Lacking a medium to explain the cultural differences between the Galician community and the rest of the Spanish state, some Galician intellectuals turned to Atlanticism rather than Celticism, a phenomenon which links could be formed between the various Atlantic communities from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The result is cultural and mythical Atlantic space which would be in permanent conflict with a Mediterranean space of culture symbolising Castilian dominance (Risco 1961:13).

Cunqueiro's exploration of Atlanticism redefines the scope of his writing. The *Chronicles of the Subchantor*, in which his adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* appears, is set in French Brittany –one of the more representative of the Atlantic communities. The ocean also constitutes the central space in his narrative writing –*The Boyhood Deeds of Ulysses*–, and also in his theatrical works.⁸³ Despite his interest in Atlanticism, Cunqueiro does not abandon the classical works or the authors such as William Shakespeare who so influenced his life and literary work. His own personal anglophilia and his admiration for Shakespeare in this stage of transition led to the first adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* in Galicia literature. “Función de Romeo e Xulieta, Famosos Namorados” (“The play of Romeo and Juliet, Famous Lovers”) is a free adaptation of the Veronese couple's story portrayed by William Shakespeare, and is part of the novel *Chronicles of the Subchantor* (1956). Winning the Critics Prize in 1959 for the self-translation which Cunqueiro undertook at the time,⁸⁴ this novel is one of his most celebrated works, and tells the story of the peregrination of the

⁸² See Cunqueiro's *El año del cometa con la batalla de los cuatro reyes* (1974) (The year of the comet), written in his latter stage, in which the characters whom he had previously praised now become the object of ridicule and mockery. See specifically chapters 2.2 and 2.5 of Álvarez, Marta (2010).

⁸³ See the references to the castle in Elsinor and the ocean waves in Cunqueiro's *Don Hamlet* and Jarazo (2006).

⁸⁴ Cunqueiro's novel was critically acclaimed by Castilian intelligentsia during Francoism's most decisive years. This prize certainly secures the recognition of his many years as a writer, but it also suggests the social acceptance of the novel under the regime.

Subchantor of Pontivy through French Brittany accompanied by various ghosts along the way. However, few readers have detected the profound symbolic meaning of this novel, or grasped its cohesion with Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.⁸⁵ In Spitzmesser's words Cunqueiro's travel narratives became a rather successful technique to escape Franco's repression and fulfil his utopian expectations. In fact, Spitzmesser's theory on the implications travel narratives had during the Spanish post-Civil War period also corresponds, in a way, with Cunqueiro's conception of fiction and reality:

In Freudian terms the journey is related to the desire for death, to the permanent settlement in a place where there is no privileged imbalance or struggle. In a Lacanian sense, it could also be expressed as a symbolic attempt to recover the past through fables, in a process of manipulation of language that rejects a real world too terrible to be assumed. (1995:71)

This terrible world which both Cunqueiro and Spitzmesser describe during Francoism must confront numerous obstacles such as censorship or the regime's opposition to the cultural peripheries which had up to then coexisted with the Spanish state. Galicia society had declined in all aspects of its cultural life including theatre. Franco's regime in Galicia provoked more harmful and persistent effects on theatre than on any other literary or artistic field. The modest but intense stage activity during the twenties and thirties was followed by an almost absolute emptiness. When Cunqueiro was writing *Don Hamlet* (1958) and *A noite vai coma un río* (1960) only Galaxia Press worked, confronting official hindrance, for the cultural recovery of Galicia and sought to maintain cultural life, before the war. Institutions such as *Escola Dramática Galega* (Galician Drama School) and *Escola Rexional de Declamación* (Regional Performance School) had no alternative but to close, which negatively influenced interpretative quality. In the sixties, actors and directors willing to reignite the history of Galician theatre held few references except for those provided by cinema and theatre on TV. Old theatres, which had been very active during the twenties and the Republican years, were now turned into cinemas due to the disinterest of Franco's officials. The authors who insisted on writing plays in Galician knew they were writing an invention called "theatre to

⁸⁵ Apart from the fact that Romeo's name stands for pilgrim or wanderer (Florio 1598:333), criticism has recently established the importance of space, banishment and travel within Shakespeare's early play. Exile and location are generic topics to pastoral comedy, Petrarchan conventions, or many Shakespearean plays, when it applies to punishment, plot-twistings, or revenge (Kingsley-Smith 2003:3-4). In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, the importance of space is, in fact, exemplified by Romeo's exile and the final misunderstanding, key factors in the resolution of the drama. Even the city of Verona, present in the prologue and the final act, becomes a claustrophobic space that "constituted by the feud, asserts itself like any ideology as the only reality" (Snyder 1996:93) possible for these lovers.

read". Cunqueiro shows his uneasiness with a theatre scene that makes performance almost impossible in an interview published in *Grial*. The writing exists, of course, but the author is aware that theatre is an art that demands staging, the communication through the actor's live and actual voice on the stage. When asked about his dramatic work, the writer declares he will not write a play again without assurance that an audience will see it performed on the stage: "I have three, four, five unfinished short plays, notes here and there, undeveloped because I do not enjoy publishing them anymore. I will not publish any other play. If I finish any of them, I will be sure they will be staged"⁸⁶ (Lago et al 1993:486).

This attitude of the writer reveals that one of the first problems in his stage play corresponds to the absence of a physical space where to represent his plays. Cunqueiro, therefore, accepts that it must transgress the natural space of Galician theatrical activity if he wants to continue writing theatre.⁸⁷ This is how Cunqueiro writes this adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*. In this sense, the realm of imagined spaces in Galician literature and in Cunqueiro becomes a controversial but central issue. Such is the state of Galician culture and theatrical production at the time, that Cunqueiro's "Función de Romeo e Xulieta, famosos namorados" (1956) does not even constitute a real play. The improvised, almost nonexistent play in five scenes is forced into the novel. In Araceli García Ballesteros' words "'Función de Romeo e Xulieta' is a play that reacts against a 'pièce bien faite', against every prototype of dead and unimaginative drama, which was everywhere and, of course, also present in Galician theatre" (Herrero 1991:143).

The story tells the adventures of executed ghosts such Madame Clarina, whom the Subchantor falls in love with, or Colonel Pierre Coulaincourt, who was executed for crimes that are explained through the course of narration. Anne Charles Mathieu Crozon Guénola, the Subchantor of the choir in a church in the city of Pontivy is kidnapped by the ghosts. Even though the action in the play takes place in French Brittany, Cunqueiro subtly hints at the well-known technique of the play-within-the-play that Shakespeare employs in *Hamlet*, and introduces, in the middle of the novel, a small theatrical adaptation based in

⁸⁶ Cunqueiro's adaptation of a play by the Irish writer Lord Dunsany *A sentencia dourada (The Golden Doom)* (1980) is the only exception. This play reminds us of his previous "Función" in its treatment of symbolism and space: "Now I introduce the reader to a play written by Lord Dunsany. It is not a translation, as I add some scenes and dialogues from my own imagination. [...] I believe that, if Lord Dunsany, a dreamer, would have had any news of my interference in his short play, he would not take it as an offense" (Dunsany 1980: 87).

⁸⁷ There also exists an adaptation for radio of the play *Sueño de una Noche de San Juan (A Midsummer Night's Dream)* written by Álvaro Cunqueiro and edited by Xavier Seoane & Lino Braxe: *A máxia da palabra: Cunqueiro na rádio* (1991).

Verona, in what may be deemed a play-within-the-novel. The first evident hint by Cunqueiro is towards the literary genre itself as a space.⁸⁸ Cunqueiro, a journalist and editor-in-chief for over twenty years, is well aware of the importance of the physical space in writing, be it in a news article or in any other of the dominant literary genres. The Galician writer thereby breaks with what may be called the formal classical space in which the adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet*, a theatrical piece, should be written and adapts it as a novel. The second clue is the opposition that exists between the space in the novel and in the theatrical adaptation. The events of the novel take place within the Atlantic framework, in French Brittany, while the “Función de Romeo e Xulieta” takes place in Verona, Italy, a much more evident symbol of Mediterranean culture and a direct heir to the Roman Empire. This novel thereby makes specific reference to the author’s transition from Celticism to Atlanticism, and subsequently to Anglophilia.⁸⁹ Within the symbolic space of “Función”, the theatrical adaptation begins with an explanatory note:

My novel *Chronicles of the Subcantor*, tells the story of several dead characters and the Subcantor of Pontivy on a carriage. By daylight, they look like people of this world, with their flesh, as before crossing the boundaries of death, whereas by night, the skeletons come to light. Being mistaken in a Breton village of France for the Italian comedians who were due to perform the play of *Romeo and Juliet*, they had no other option but to go on stage, to improvise the following play, with an agreed text, as it seems, by colonel Coulaincourt of Bayeux and madame Clarina of Saint-Vaast. The V scene, is taken from the Subcantor’s notes.⁹⁰ (Cunqueiro 2004:199)

As Cunqueiro points out the ghosts in the narrative are mistaken for Italian players coming to France in order to stage an English drama which was originally set in Italian Verona. Cunqueiro works on the Shakespearean plot to

⁸⁸ To start with, the marginal status of Galician language and Galician drama, as well as Cunqueiro’s experimentation with the theatre of the absurd in a non-educated ambience, suggest banishment or exile from the official literary canon, as critics’ reviews and audience’s letters publicly addressed to Cunqueiro have evidenced (Cunqueiro 1958:25).

⁸⁹ However, Cunqueiro’s use of space as a means of adapting a mythical character has also been studied in several of his novels such as *Merlin and Company* (1955) (Noia 1982), *Chronicles of the Subcantor* (1956) (Spitzmesser 1995), *The Boyhood Deeds of Ulysses* (1960) (López 2004), as well as in his *Don Hamlet* (1958) (Jarazo 2006).

⁹⁰ “Na miña novela *As crónicas do sochantre*, xa se conta que os finados que van en carroza co sochantre de Pontivy, de día aparecen como xente deste mundo, coas carnes que tiñan cando pasaron ás alamedas da morte, e polas noites poñen á luz os seus esqueletes. Tendo sido estes difuntos do meu relato confundidos nun pobo de Bretaña de Francia cos cómicos italiáns que iban a representar a función de *Romeo e Xulieta*, non tiveron máis remedio que rubir a táboas, e improvisar a peza que aquí vai, texto acordado, ao parecer, polo coronel de Coulaincourt de Bayeux e madame Clarina de Saint-Vaast. A escea V, está tomada das notas que deixou o sochantre” [Translations in this article are the authors’, unless otherwise specified].

fit the tastes of Galician people for fable and myth. Geographical, cultural and linguistic incongruity, cultural starvation, siege and desperation are present in Cunqueiro's impossible Verona as it was in the moribund and almost inexistent Galicia that existed under Franco's regime. Given the impossibility of a Galician dramatic tradition in the 20th century, Cunqueiro's "Función" reaches its audience as a play-within-a-novel play. In the same way, as the piece is never staged in contemporary Galicia, the play as such finally vanishes within the narrative as soon as the players get back to their original skeleton appearances.

The story of Romeo and Juliet has been told in many different ways by authors from all over the world and it always seems to appeal to the audience. It belongs to the world's collective memory and has thus transcended the possible difficulties that its multicultural versions may have entailed. This tragic legend is reminiscent of certain well known episodes of Greek mythology such as "Hero and Leander" or "Pyramus and Thisbe". It also evokes some medieval legends although its plot was originally outlined in Xenophon of Ephesus' *Ephesian Romance*. But its most direct source is *The Tragical History of Romeus and Juliet* (1562), a long narrative poem by Arthur Brooke based on Boaistuau's translation of Bandello's novel (1554). Compared with Brooke's, however, Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is enriched by the presence of secondary characters that highlight the realistic background of the play and underline the social differences of its time. As it was pointed out by Ángel-Luis Pujante, *Romeo and Juliet* displays a much improved relation between language and action and between language and character than any other previous Shakespearean play. And the variety of styles can be understood as a wide diversity of settings and moods: "The work is abundant in dramatic contrasts served by a rich verbalisation in which the verse coexists with the prose, the loose verse with the rhymed, the cult with the colloquial and the lyric with the dramatic" (2002:10).

According to Purificación Ribes, this fact had been previously noticed by important authors like H. B. Charlton, M. C. Bradbrook, I. Evans, D. Cole or H. Levin. But G. Melchiori is the first to go a step further by pointing to the stylistic variety of the play as a consequence of the political situation of England at the time (Conejero and Ribes 1991:9-11). In this sense, Clara Calvo explains, by quoting Norman Jones, that William Shakespeare had already been born into a moribund culture. By the time Shakespeare began to write, England was going through a time of extraordinary change in society, politics, economics and religion. In other words, there was a change in the culture and the relationship between the individual and his/her environment. The trigger for these changes, although not the only cause, was undoubtedly the religious conflict that emerged from the clash between Catholicism and the Protestant

Reform (Pujante and Calvo 2002:191). However, besides the stylistic contrasts, this Shakespearean tragedy also deals with related conflicts such as idealism-realism, comedy-tragedy, or youth-maturity. Ribes highlights the moral distance which separates the young couple from the world of adults as one of the permanent obstacles they must attempt to overcome. While Romeo and Juliet live every moment of their lives with a fierce intensity, their parents and the representatives of maturity remain anchored in a past of memories. They are totally unaware of the interests of the new generations, which will increasingly become more isolated (Conejero and Ribes 1991:32). Thus, these conflicts are also applied to location and displacement in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. However, what happens with these oppositional locations in an evasive writer such as Cunqueiro?

The situation described by Shakespeare is quite familiar for Galician people living under the outstanding contrasts originated during Franco's dictatorship. The beginning of Francoism signalled the death of Galician culture as well as the silent, clandestine fight for a new democratic era against an ancient power which faced the interests of democratic generations. And secrecy itself involves deep conflicts, alienation, nonsense, isolation and even death in an unequal fight for change. Romeo's letter, hence, the only clear reference to the Shakespearean play in the "funció Conejero and Ribes n", is not real either. Once the representation is over, a girl in the audience discovers that the letter that has just been read by the deceased girl playing the role of Xulieta was empty of Romeo's beautiful, idealised words: "Mother, mother! There was no Romeo, neither memories, nor lillies!"⁹¹ (Cunqueiro 2004: 213). According to Xosé María Paz Gago, these final words uttered by the girl in the courtyard:

[...] condense the unconceivable message, the storyline and existential emptiness, the tragic humour of the theatre of the absurd: if there is no bald singer in *Cantarice Chauve*, if there is no African pachyderm in *Rinoceronte*, if Godot never turns out in *Waiting for Godot*, Cunqueiro makes the little girl by the window in Comfront the most impersonal character in "Función de Romeo e Xulieta." (Paz 1993:469)

The sense of tragedy and the black humour are two of the formal recourses of the theatrical adaptation that create an atmosphere of desperation that grows through the course of the play. However, Cunqueiro bring large doses of macabre humour to the story in prejudice to the classic tragic catharsis of other works such as his *Don Hamlet*. For example, the so-called love letter is actually a cruel list of all the taxes to be paid by the impoverished citizens, a marriage licence included:

⁹¹ "¡Ña nai, ña nai! ¡Non había Romeo, nin memorias, nin lirios!" (Cunqueiro 2004: 213).

Comfront Council in Landes. A licence for coastgard vessel Chaillot, named Braque, to marry citizen Bonnet, named Fleur Tranquille, the 6th of Springtime. A franc for the licence. A licence for old Gomán, to pick up lost *cagallóns* on the market on Thursdays. Free licence. A licence for tailor Terne to sew national buttons on trousers. Two francs.⁹² (Cunqueiro 2004:212)

This list is especially cruel given the situation of famine and the desperation of the people of Verona portrayed throughout the “función”. As the opening lines of the play explain, Verona has been under siege, starvation, and in isolation and fear for eleven years: “Eleven hard years! At last, after eleven years under siege, these sad Swissmen finish the siege on Verona. They were constant shadows on the walls of our village”⁹³ (201). One of the characters describes death enclosed in the interior space of Verona resulting from eleven years of siege. Nature has been devoured by the starving citizens of Verona so that it is now as dead as the sieged citizens. There is no green life or ideal landscapes within enclosure, which contrasts one again with the gardens of the castle in *Don Hamlet* (Jarazo 2006:141-154):

Eleven years of death, starvation, thirst, and fear. We are ghosts, wanderers on the squares, streets, on the yards, [...] more than free citizens of Verona [...] There is no green in Verona, because it was the food for the mothers who were feeding their toddlers. There is no nightingale on the fountain. It was eaten by the girls, who wanted their boyfriends to see something more than their bones. And nobody was able to sing in Verona, there was no air. For eleven years, our doors were completely locked. The Swissmen are now gone, and we are waking up little by little, like a foggy daybreak after a long Winter night. We will now know more after the Swiss withdrawal, it is said some mail is coming along the river from Sienna.⁹⁴ (204-5)

⁹² “Alcaldía de Comfront en Landes. Licencia ao gardarrios Chaillot, dito Braque, pra casar coa cidadana Bonnet, dita Fleur Tranquille, o seis de Froleal. Un franco pola licencia. Licencia á vella Gomán, pra andar aos cagallós perdidos nos mercados dos xoves. Gratuíto. Licencia ao xastre Terne pra pór botóns nacionais nos culotes. Dous francos” (Cunqueiro 2004:212).

⁹³ “SOLDADO: ¡Once anos de sudarvos! Ao fin, tras once anos de sitio, eses tristes suizos ergueron o cerco de Verona. Foron como néboa borrallenta apegada ás murallas da nosa vila” (201).

⁹⁴ “Once anos tivémolos ao pescozo coma corda de xusticia. Once anos de morte, de fame, de sede, de medo. Máis que xente libre de Verona somos unha corte de pantasma, vagabunda polas prazas e rúas, polos patios de armas... Non hai unha herba en Verona, porque foi comida polas nais pra amamantar aos nenos. Non hai un reiseñor na pineta porque foi xantado polas mozas pra podere gardar pra os seus namorados algo máis que o esquelete. E nin había quen poidese cantar en Verona, que non había áer, once anos pechadas as nosas portas. Vanse os suizos, e nós aínda estamos espertando a poucos, como alba rosada após unha longa noite de inverno. Canto haxa de verdade nesta marcha súpeta dos suizos, saberémolo agora, que anuncian que chega un correo de Siena polos pasos do río (204-5).

But in addition to the clear contrast between the fertile and infertile land, or the opposition between incarceration and freedom, also evident in *Don Hamlet*, one of the most significant in the treatment of space in both works is when the space of the Elsinor's castle finally opens up at the end of the play, without the public realising the consequences of this action. However, in "Función", Cunqueiro concentrates all his creativity on showing that which he had not shown in the work about the Prince of Denmark: the consequence of opening the space that had been under siege for years to the exterior, and the tragic impact this was to have on its characters.⁹⁵ "ANOTHER SOLDIER: They are opening the doors!"⁹⁶ (201), and the city of Verona is no longer under siege.

Striking similarities could be deduced from the devastating effects of the Civil War, also aggravated by the adoption of autarkic economic policy until 1951. Those were times of state intervention; economic stagnation, unemployment, hunger, and low growth rates. The regime supported an isolating industrial system that promoted only goods for internal consumption (Tusell 1991:554). In February 1957, only a year after the publication of the *Chronicles*, the Falangist Government was replaced by a group of Opus Dei ministers called "technocrats". The new government opened the Spanish market to neoliberalism, causing social disconcert among the population, which was very similar to the experienced by the inhabitants of Verona.

Similarly, in the play, desperation is no longer focused on a closed space, the lack of communication with the outward world. Desperation is now focused on starvation, thirst and hunger. The fact that the only element now entering Verona is a letter is significant, emphasising the desperation of the citizens. The expectant audience waits for the letter to bring with it news of food, liberalisation and change. This is the only reason why they finally agree to listen to Xulieta's reading: "Silence! silence! This letter maybe brings good news for all of us, for the city of Verona. Maybe the sender does not know anyone in this village apart from Lady Xulieta. We may have news in the letter about Mantua's wheat, Venetian oxen, wine, and our remaining friends"⁹⁷ (207-208). However, the letter and the play, the longed change, the liberalisation and the food turn out to be but a mirage. In fact, the pretend players turn into skeletons with the onset of night and the already scared audience panics:

⁹⁵ For a detailed analysis of the impact of the siege on the people in the theatrical adaptation *Romeo and Juliet*, see Jarazo and Domínguez (2010:133-145).

⁹⁶ "OUTRO SOLDADO: ¡Xa están abrindo as portas!" (201).

⁹⁷ "¡Silencio, silencio! Esta carta quizabes trai novas pra todos, pra a cidade de Verona toda. Quen a escribe pode ser que non seipa de ninguén máis nesta vila que de dona Xulieta. Virán quizabes noticias do trigo de Mantua, dos bois de Venecia, do viño, e de cantos amigos nos quedan no mundo" (207-8).

“*Xulieta’s hands, by the torch’s light, are nude of flesh. Xulieta, afraid of her own appearance, let the missive fall. Citizens start to scream loudly. Some citizens cry in despair [...]*”⁹⁸ (211). As a result, the initial expectations finally carry added fear, despair and confusion. Now everybody in the audience thinks that Romeo’s love letter –their only possible opportunity of a better life– is a plague bringing up misfortunes with it: “Swissmen retreat because of the Black death! The letter did not bring us love but Black death! Black Death! Black Death has arrived from Sienna!”⁹⁹ (211). The audience runs away *impromptu* but –making for a rather sordid ending– an old woman remains at the closing scene who asks begging for food once the “función”, the players and the letter are fatally gone: “My dear child, my dear child, do you know if they give free bread in Lanrival on Saturdays?”¹⁰⁰ (212). As Paz Gago explains:

People from Verona are only concerned about the satisfaction of their primary needs, which explains their absurd yearning for Mantua’s wheat, Venice’s oxen, bread and wine; the climax of black humour comes when they suggest eating the mailman’s horse, a proposition humorously highlighted by the Chorus: Give us a portion of horse!; something far removed from what the reader might expect from the “function” of the two popular lovers. (1993:469)

As highlighted by Paz Gago, the absurd dialogues and grotesque situations of the absurd theatre of the 1940’s and 1950’s, supplied Cunqueiro with an existential debate that questioned valid society and the man that lived in it. It is through formal elements, such as apparently senseless plots, repetitive dialogues and the absence of a clear dramatic sequence that Cunqueiro can create a dreamlike atmosphere allowing him to cast doubt over all that fervent censorship. However, this sense of humour, as well as absurd theatre, creates a tragic atmosphere similar to that described by Pujante in William Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. In Pujante’s opinion, this work “has a tragic effect because the protagonists, with whom it is easy to identify, are vulnerable victims of a situation of hatred and violence that they neither want nor can remedy” (2002:29). Cunqueiro does not need to tell a legendary story already known to his audience. The five scenes of his one single act are enough for the author to adapt the five acts of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* and to extract all the elements which can better fit the tastes and needs of Galician society at the time. All in all, as Pujante states, what prompts us to Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet* is not its formal or argumentative rigour, but how the actions of various

⁹⁸ “*As mans de Xulieta, á luz da linterna, vense descubertas de carne. Xulieta, horrorizada de sí mesma, deixa cair a carta. As xentes estalan en grandes berros e choros*” (211).

⁹⁹ “*¡Os suizos fóronse porque viña a peste! ¡Non traguía amor o correo, que traguía a peste! ¡A peste moura! ¡Veu a peste de Siena!*” (211).

¹⁰⁰ “*Nena, nena, ¿i volven a dar esmola de pan en Lanrival os sábados?*” (212).

characters represent a permanent threat to the happiness of the protagonists (28). And this last idea is perfectly transmitted by Cunqueiro. External circumstances also continually prevent happiness, love, life, and self-realisation in *Romeo and Juliet* as in “Función de Romeo e Xulieta”, as was also the case in Franco’s Galicia and Spain. No matter how much the characters or Galician citizens and intellectuals beg for change, death is the unavoidable ending in all cases.

The protagonists and their ideal longings are definitely outshone by the external circumstances and the secondary characters in both Shakespeare and Cunqueiro’s works. This is also the case in Galicia, where the social and political circumstances of Franco’s dictatorship outshine the cultural longings of Galician citizens, who can only know of their identity and language through their fellow countrymen in exile. News always comes from an external space. Those external circumstances and disruptions are solved in Shakespeare by location opposition in *Romeo and Juliet*, as used in the balcony lines, and adapted by Cunqueiro into an oppositional scheme of place (in and out). This scheme is also reinforced with the lack of, or the ineffectiveness of communication –surrealist dialogues in the Galician adaptation– and interruptions. In Shakespeare’s, Juliet is indirectly introduced in the third scene of the play through the dialogue that her father holds with Paris. Later, when she finally appears in the fourth scene, her presence is completely dominated by her mother and wet nurse’s commentaries and opinions. This is also the case in Cunqueiro’s work. He introduces Xulieta in the third of his five scenes, when she is found out to be the addressee of the letter: “To my dearest *infanta* of Verona, lady Xulieta”¹⁰¹ (Cunqueiro 2004:207). But the only information about her is provided by the gossiping of the secondary characters in the audience: “Who is lady Xulieta? She is a lady, a famous lover! Is she the daughter of Scala [...]? No, [...] she is the daughter of Capulet family in the old square. [...] She is very young. Her family gained their fortune by exporting onions to Venice. They used to export silky linen”¹⁰² (208). This last reference to the past conveys a new spatial opposition inside-main plot / outside-secondary plot under siege Verona. Throughout the play, the citizens of Verona are waiting for food and freedom to get inside in the near future. This is the only reference to a golden age in the play, including also the idea of food getting outside Verona. The outside of Verona, however, is destroyed by Swiss soldiers, probably in order to avoid Black death expanding to other territories: “AN OLD MAN:

¹⁰¹ “Para a mui dolorida infanta de Verona, doña Xulieta” (Cunqueiro 2004:207).

¹⁰² “¿Quién é esa dona Xulieta? É de señores. É unha namorada célebre. ¿Unha dos Caputelo que paríu dun ferreiro? Non, esta non paríu, que é dos Montescos da praza vella. Pois tamén é unha caste de xente amancebada. Esta é noviña. Fixeron o seu capital mandando cebolas a Venecia. Tamén mandaban fío de seda” (208).

Swissman are burning the fields! They are burning everything they're not carrying with them!"¹⁰³ (201). In this quotation, the outside world is being destroyed by foreigners –citizens born in a different space or land -. This is significantly interesting as the lands being wasted are outside Verona, rather than destroying the inside of the corrupted city. In a way, Cunqueiro is emphasizing the fact that there is nothing left to destroy in Verona. As a contrast, the inner space in Elsinor in *Don Hamlet* suffers the consequences of the uncontrollable winds inside the castle only by the end of play.

As for Galician Romeo, depicted by Shakespeare as a codified Petrarchan character following Baldassare Castiglione's *Book of the Courtier* (1528), there is no reference to him until the fourth scene of the "función", and he is merely referred to as the author of the letter addressed to Xulieta. He never physically appears on stage and therefore cannot interact with Xulieta. Similarly, Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet appear together only four times throughout the play: when they meet in the party, in the balcony scene, when arranging to get married and right before their separation. The balcony scene is the longest one (approximately one hundred and forty verses), followed by the farewell (about sixty). The other two encounters are extremely brief: eighteen verses when they first meet and eleven before marriage. Romeo would have loved to be on Juliet's balcony in much the same way that Cunqueiro's characters beg for the city walls to open and let food and hope in. Similarly, characters in Shakespeare and Cunqueiro do not really manage to share a common space for communication and understanding, as they are always separated by top/bottom - inside/outside spaces in conflict. And yet, common to all of these brief and conflictive meetings, according to Pujante, is the fact that they are constantly interrupted by the mother, the nurse, or the friar (2002:29). In Cunqueiro's, these constant interruptions are drawn on stage with secondary dialogues, that extend throughout the play, and the lyric discourse, aroused by an impossible passion, used in Xulieta's reflections and Romeo's letter. These should be considered as one of Cunqueiro's best poetic efforts according to Paz Gago (1993:469). Hence the messages of fear and misfortune, together with the depiction of the situation of Verona and its citizens at the time, similarly reach Cunqueiro's readers through the secondary characters' permanent interruptions and gossiping. In the following lines, the plague is announced by "as xentes" in the audience:

¹⁰³ "UN VELLO PEISANO: ¡Está ardendo o campo dos suizos! ¡Queiman o que non se levan!" (201).

CITIZENS ON THE WALL, THE SQUARE AND THE WHOLE VILLAGE

The Black death has arrived! The comedians brought the Black death! The Italian Black death has arrived! Love brought the Black death on its bones! Look at Death! The Black death! The Black death!¹⁰⁴ (Cunqueiro 2004:211)

This excerpt might suggest that the inhabitants in Verona believe that only misfortune and horrible deeds can be expected from the outer space. In a way, this statement is closely linked to the pessimism of the citizens, and the uncertainty of the time in Verona, reflecting Spain's uncertainties caused by the recent economic and social changes in Franco's regime. The citizens' gossiping also introduces Xulieta in the third scene providing a setting of fear and siege in the first scene. The whole idea of the arrival of the letter is narrated by the expectant citizens and their guessing at the beginning of the "función":

A SOLDIER

It is said there is some mail from Mantua coming along the river!

A WOMAN

Another soldier told me Mantua was burnt.

AN OLD MAN

Then, it must be from Venice.

A WOMAN

Someone saw some mailman from Venice approaching the river in his horse.

A MERCHANT

There is no Venetian mailman upon his horse, he would have chosen a maritime route. He must be from Sienna, if Mantua was finally burnt.¹⁰⁵ (203)

Secondary and external data by means of gossiping is the only available information in the plays by both Shakespeare and Cunqueiro symbolising, in the latter, Galicia's marginal position in the Spanish state during Franco's regime and the role of exiled intellectuals responsible for reviving local culture from an outward position. Both the mailman and the gossiping might manifest Cunqueiro's symbolic use of information. As a journalist, the Galician writer is aware of the influence of censorship, but also of the liberating power of

¹⁰⁴ "AS XENTES DA MURALLA E DA PRAZA E O POBO TODO: ¡A peste! ¡Trouwérona os cómicos! ¡A peste moura de Italia! ¡O amor traguía a peste nos ósos! ¡Mirade a morte! ¡A peste! ¡A peste!" (Cunqueiro 2004:211).

¹⁰⁵ "UN SOLDADO: ¡Din que vén un correo de Mantua, e que xa pasou o río!

UNHA MULLER: Mantua dixo outro señor soldado que a queimaran.

UN PEISANO: Pois entón será un correo de Venecia.

UNHA MULLER: Ven correo de Venecia dacabalo. Xa o viran pasa-lo río.

UN MERCADER: Dacabalo non poderá ser de Venecia. Ese viría polo mar. Será de Siena, si é que queimaron Mantua" (203).

information.¹⁰⁶ Miscommunication, frustration and alienation inside Galicia are similarly posed throughout the play by Cunqueiro:

A WOMAN
Will they bring some bread, sir?
AN OLD MAN
Will they bring some Mantua's wheat?
A SOLDIER
When are they going to sell Venetian oxen in the market again?
A WOMAN
We want bread! A small piece of bread, sir!
A CORPORAL
If someone gave us some food, we would calmly listen to the news from Sienna.¹⁰⁷ (205)

Frustration finally shows up even amongst the soldiers trapped in the city, and who should guard for the status quo in Verona. Surprisingly, the role of the military in the play is persistent through their dialogue with the citizens, but their interaction is never authoritative or negatively portrayed. Secondary characters' permanent interruptions in these dialogues, however, resemble Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* same lack of information and miscommunication among characters: "The considerable absence of communication between the characters, or, rather, the absence of communication of essential information, or simply of utility, is almost always very poor, fragmentary, or even nonexistent, rarely limiting the field of knowledge to more than two characters" (Rutelli 1985:11-2). In fact, the use of language is one of Shakespeare's most original representations of exile: "The most basic equation of Shakespearean exile is that language equals creativity and thus power. Language-loss equates to silence, impotence and death" (Kingsley-Smith 2003:30).

But even if Cunqueiro's characters do not interact much, readers can easily understand the underlying plot, through the secondary –external-to-the-main-plot- characters' gossiping. They are part of the actual audience of the "función", knowing as much of the plot as the citizens of Verona do. Thus, the cruel reality of the "función" is portrayed by its secondary characters while the

¹⁰⁶ Several scholars have analysed Cunqueiro's use information as a means of conveying social criticism in the Spanish press. See Mera Fernández (2000, 2007) for more information.

¹⁰⁷ "UNHA MULLER: ¿Traguerá pan, señoría?
UN PEISANO: ¿Virá trigo de Mantua?
UN SOLDADO: ¿Cándo volverá a venderse en Verona boi de Venecia no?
UNHA MULLER: ¡Queremos pan! ¡Unha codiña, señoría!
UN SOLDADO: Millor sería que deran denantes algo de comer, pra poder escoitar con calma ao correo de Siena" (205).

ideal story of the protagonists is proven to be absolutely not real and virtually nonexistent both in and outside the “función” itself. It is completely outshone by this secondary disjointed narrative constructed of gossip and guessing. Both the citizens and the audience are opened to speculations about the future of the state. Uncertainty takes over Verona as much as it took over Spanish society during the rapid changes experienced by the adoption of neoliberalism and capitalism, causing the final aperture of the regime to the world.

Isolation, alienation, secrecy, and lack of communication were all part of everyday Galicia under Franco’s regime as much as they were part of Cunqueiro’s version of Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. The use of space is essential in order to understand how Cunqueiro reflects oppression in Galicia by means of this free adaptation of Shakespeare. Issues such as landscape or simply space have proved to be compulsory in Cunqueiro’s aesthetics while other ideas such as exile define a whole generation of Galician writers who abandoned Spain in order to survive, but also a generation of writers like Cunqueiro, who experienced a pseudo-exile.¹⁰⁸ In other words, a generation who evaded Galicia’s traumatic problems after the post-civil war period through the imagination used in their literary creations. Cunqueiro draws a feeble line between reality and fiction. His stories are usually intertwined with historical and even biographical facts, e.g. his native village, Mondoñedo:

Some way or another, there is always a bit of Mondoñedo in my books. [...] Mondoñedo is present in every little village I write about, no matter how different they are. No matter if it is a Greek city where Ulysses arrives or a village from Brittany with the Subchantor and the ghosts; every village has a bit of my village. (Ricci 1971:337)

As we can observe in the treatment of space in the work of Álvaro Cunqueiro, it even has a certain biographical tone, which once again demonstrates the Galician author’s style when it comes to blurring the lines between reality and fiction. This style allows him to play with the ability to tell stories, or to adapt others, while passing unnoticed before the eyes of the censors of the Francoist regime. This adaptation process might seem too subtle, or even open to subjective interpretation, however, in many interviews, the Galician writer has stated how the classical myths of universal literature, among

¹⁰⁸ Although this act of self-alienation is commonly romanticised with the notion of artist and creativity, Cunqueiro suffered from different levels of rejection. In fact, some critics have established an ideological exile in his career –coinciding with the outbreak of the Civil War and his support to Falange Española– until the fifties. However, he was also forced into a physical banishment. Cunqueiro had to leave Madrid and come back to Galicia after being expelled from the Journalist’s Registry Office when he was caught in a diplomatic incident. See Franco Grande (1991) for more information.

them his admired Shakespeare, constitute a revealing energy that exceeds the boundaries of censorship and repression:

Topics such as classical Greek and Latin literature are often the subject of your books, why do you like the classics so much?

[...] I lived during the Civil War and subsequent years, and I had an intellectual and moral concern about the futility of vengeance. This is what A man who looked like *Orestes* is about. I have been a reader of Shakespeare since I was a child and they are all in it. One day I was surprised that Hamlet did not fit within his work. There was a missing piece. I came to realise that this great drama of human maturity was the Oedipus complex. In other words, the murderer of his father, who married his mother, was his true father. Then everything fits and the mother wants to marry his son to avoid revenge. After I wrote my *Hamlet*, other writers would come to this discovery. Clearly, eternal human passions are all the same since the creation of classic myths. Human beings, since then, had no new passions. Everything is in the Greeks.

It is curious, but during the German occupation of France, a Frenchman translated Homer. During Francoism, Segarra, in Catalonia, translated Shakespeare [...]. I know that censorship was ferocious against a few paragraphs in Segarra's translation, as Shakespeare was often of a political opinion. Thus, the classics are sometimes the means for a man to say what he is not allowed to utter in a situation without much freedom of speech. (Outeiriño 1979:12)

In the end, Cunqueiro mastered the art of speaking out in a restrictive and repressive atmosphere. This is evident not only through the formal experimentation of his characters and spaces in his novels, such as the portrayal of Camelot in *Merlin and Company*, the ocean in *The Boyhood Deeds of Ulysses*, but also in his dramatic work: Mondoñedo in *Don Hamlet*, and Verona in his "Función de Romeo e Xulieta." The Galician writer adapts the literary genres to his own taste, moulding the space to his needs, and he makes use of diverse symbolic spaces to reinvent well-known universal myths such as Romeo and Juliet, adapting them to the needs of the Galician community, particularly the need for a veiled criticism of the existing system.

In the years when Camilo José Cela and his realistic *La Colmena* (*The Hive*) (1951) are dominant in the contemporary literary canon, Cunqueiro was met with ferocious criticism over the lack of a real space in his works. However, his treatment of space is more subtle than critics have until very recently believed. By creating a new geographical Atlantic realm, as he does in this novel, where Galicia is placed at the same level as Brittany or Ireland, it has proved of great importance for those who seek to voice opposition to the cultural domination of the Mediterranean. By experimenting with the symbolic possibilities of the space in these plays, he has been able to reflect Spaniards'

pessimism experienced during the forties and fifties, as well as contributing to dignifying Galician language and literature. Criticism should now encourage a second reading of Cunqueiro's Shakespearean adaptations in terms of geographical, cultural, and symbolic location. Both *Don Hamlet* and "Función de Romeo e Xulieta" have proved, by means of negating a common space for communication, that Cunqueiro's adaptation is essential in denouncing cultural repression.

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