



PRINTING FAMILIES: INCEST AND THE RISE OF THE NOVEL IN EARLY MODERN SPAIN

Enrique GARCÍA SANTO-TOMÁS
University of Michigan (Estados Unidos)

enriqueg@umich.edu

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ABSTRACT:

The short story enjoyed unparalleled success in the seventeenth century, either independently or as a short piece gathered in a collection. Although it frequently dealt with different variations of love, honor, leisure, and friendship, it also explored unspeakable acts like incest, rape, pederasty, and even bestiality. Scholars working on its trajectory from Miguel Cervantes to Francisco Santos have for the most part shied away from examining these transgressive themes. Incest, in particular, presents a fascinating paradox: its treatment in contemporary theater, usually drawn from myth and folklore, has been widely studied, whereas its narrative presence, freed from tradition and more attuned to the time, remains largely unexplored. Drawing on historical parameters like the decrees on marriage by the Council of Trent as well as on recent debates active in the social sciences and literary studies, this article examines a selection of short stories published at different moments of the century that delved into this taboo. Rather than a form of Baroque excess, the narrative construction of incest should be examined as a fertile tactic through which the novel engaged with national history, societal expectations, civil and canon law, and the institutional control over the genre.

KEYWORDS:

Short Story; Incest; Marriage; Juan Pérez de Montalbán; Luis de Guevara.

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FAMILIAS DE IMPRENTA: INCESTO Y SURGIMIENTO DE LA NOVELA EN LA ESPAÑA DEL SIGLO DE ORO

RESUMEN:

La novela corta disfrutó de un éxito sin precedentes en el siglo XVII, ya fuera publicada de forma autónoma o en una colección. Aunque con frecuencia examinó diferentes variaciones de temas clásicos como el honor, el ocio o la amistad, es cierto que también se adentró en asuntos como el incesto, la violación, la pederastia e incluso el bestialismo. La crítica que ha abordado su trayectoria desde Miguel de Cervantes a Francisco Santos ha evitado por lo general tocar estos asuntos. El incesto, en concreto, presenta una fascinante paradoja: su tratamiento en el teatro de la época, usualmente inspirado en mitos y folklore, ha sido ampliamente estudiado, mientras que su presencia en la narrativa áurea, liberada de estas tradiciones y más conectada a los problemas de su tiempo, continúa fundamentalmente inexplorada. Partiendo de parámetros históricos como los decretos en torno al matrimonio del Concilio de Trento así como de debates contemporáneos provenientes de las ciencias sociales y los estudios literarios, este artículo examina una selección de novelas cortas publicadas en diferentes momentos del siglo que novelizaron este tabú. Más que como historias de exceso barroco, la construcción narrativa del incesto debe leerse como una fértil táctica a través de la cual el género se acercó a la historia nacional, a las expectativas sociales, a la ley civil y canónica y al control institucional del momento.

PALABRAS CLAVE:

Novela corta; incesto; matrimonio; Juan Pérez de Montalbán; Luis de Guevara.



1. INTRODUCTION: OPEN FOR BUSINESS

In his 1663 novel *Día y noche de Madrid* (*Day and Night of Madrid*) the writer Francisco Santos (1623-1698) depicts a maid whose employer spends all his means to keep her clean and decorous. But such an effort constitutes, the narrator humorously adds, a pointless endeavor, «porque cuida del rostro sin hacer reparo que rostro y cuerpo tienen el título que el libro de Montalbán» («because he provides for her looks without objecting that [her] face and body have the title of Montalbán's book») (2017: 149-150).¹ The joke, as many others in this unapologetically crude novel, pays homage to one of Santos' literary forefathers, in this case the most daring one, the poet, novelist, and playwright Juan Pérez de Montalbán (1602-1638). The gullible *Madriño*, writes Santos, is not aware that his promiscuous servant offers her face and body to anyone interested, as if she was taking the cue from Pérez de Montalbán's miscellany, *Para todos* (*For Everyone*, 1632). Much can be argued about the comical irony resulting from a title that sought to curb the excesses of its contemporaries with a selection of provocative stories, offering the pleasures of fiction to all of those (*para todos*) who wanted solace and entertainment. What I find most remarkable about these lines, however, is that Santos's gesture not only seems to be pointing towards a time when the *novela corta* was beginning to confirm its appealing versatility, but also serves as a reminder to keep conceiving the genre as an uncompromising and rebellious domain, much like the maid's body.² Shock value is achieved here twice, in both the crassness of the joke and in the sarcasm behind the mention of a book that broke new ground when it was first published, signaling that such editorial strategy could cater to a wide readership. Pérez de Montalbán was, after all, a maverick for his time, a young novelist who—with the help of his father, the influential bookseller Alonso Pérez de Montalbán³—challenged and delighted his readers with stories delving into subjects that went from the sublime to the abject.

This essay engages with questions of language, secrecy, and the limits of expression. It examines the presence of incest in the cultural imaginary of the early modern Spanish novel, taking as a starting point a piece by no other than Pérez de Montalbán and finishing with the little-known novelist Luis de Guevara. The Watts-ian flavor of its title may suggest that this survey is at both a programmatic and a provisional stage, as I aim to fill a critical lacuna that remains unstudied in an otherwise well-trodden field.⁴ Early critics like Agustín González de Amezúa (1881-1956) found incest unworthy of analysis, and called Pérez de Montalbán's novel *La mayor confusión* “monstrous,

¹ The author is here taking advantage of the dual nature of the word *rostro*, exploiting both its figurative (external appearance) and literal (face) meanings. All translations into English are mine.

² I use ‘novel’ in the title as an umbrella term that encapsulates the evolution of the genre, since I will be drawing in this essay from examples pertaining to the tradition of the *novela corta* as well as from lengthier *novelas*.

³ Pérez de Montalbán was named *librero del rey* in 1604. As Cayuela has pointed out, «el papel de Alonso Pérez en la difusión del género no carece de audacia» («His role in the rise of the novel did not lack in audacity») (2005: 76). On his son's career as a novelist, see Rey Hazas, as well as the introduction by Giuliani (1992: XIII-XVIII) in his edition of the *Sucesos*. Juan's work was, according to Rey Hazas, «de extraordinario éxito» («extraordinarily successful») (1995: 434), as he was «uno de los escritores más leídos del siglo XVII» («one of the most read writers of the seventeenth century») (1995: 434).

⁴ The most useful surveys of the genre are those by Ferreras (1988), Laspéras (1987), and Colón Calderón (2001). Its theoretical underpinnings are examined in Rodríguez Cuadros (2014). Two gestures in Watt's work are relevant to my approach, even though he dealt with eighteenth-century England: one was his stress on the city and the new reading public; the other was his attention paid to the shift from a patriarchal to a conjugal model of the family.

repugnant, and fetid” (monstruosa, repugnante y hedionda), the product of a *degenerado* (1929: 91). While subsequent *siglodoristas* have limited themselves to brief mentions in their surveys of the genre,⁵ a new generation of Renaissance scholars working on other national traditions has turned its attention to the cultural meaning of incest in its relation to narrative, memory, and history, drawing on the modern anthropological theory of Lévi-Strauss, Lacan’s reading of Freud’s writings on incest, as well as Foucault’s theses on the deployment of sexuality and alliance.⁶ Building on some of these conversations, but also considering important historical parameters like the Council of Trent’s decrees on marriage (1563), I read incest as a phenomenon that was conceived by Cervantes’s heirs as a self-reflexive trope to comment on both the state of the novel and on the readership who promoted its growth.⁷ I argue that this taboo manifested itself in these first decades of the century through two interconnected phenomena: on the one hand, as the radical condition from which to express a literary and social endogamy that was essential to the success of its agents; on the other hand, as one of the greatest reasons for the success of a new publishing formula, that of the short-story collection. In order to release all of its transformative potential, I take as case studies two significant elaborations of the topic—one at the early stages of the formation of the Baroque novel, the other near its swan-song—that employ incest to reflect on processes that redefine acceptable choices in sexual partners, while simultaneously questioning class structures and means of promoting kinship.⁸ Through a selection of novels by Juan Pérez de Montalbán and Luis de Guevara, I interrogate the family’s relationship to itself and to the state in the transition of a society highly stratified along feudal lines to one faced with different possibilities for social advancement. The narrative construction of incest, I conclude, should be examined as a fertile tactic through which the novel engaged with national history, societal expectations, civil and canon law, and the (ever increasing) institutional control over the genre.

INCEST IN PERSPECTIVE

Incest, which appears on numerous occasions in early modern European theater, is usually invoked through allusions either to the Greco-Roman tradition, or to Patristic, Judaic, and Biblical

⁵ See, for instance, Colón Calderón (2001: 87-88); Rabell (1997) provides some useful observations from a legal perspective, which cover a number of delicate subjects including incest.

⁶ The most important scholarship of the last fifty years has come from the Anglophone world, with a particular focus on early modern England. For a general approach in English and American literature, see Barnes, who reminds us that «Ancient mythologies of dynastic gods and folklore heroes almost inevitably originate in (often twin) brother-sister incest» (2002: 24). On incest as an «unspeakable» experience, see Luis-Martínez (2002); Pollak (2003) situates her readings in the context of changes in class and kinship organization that were taking place in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; Quilligan explores the presence of «incest schemes» in the works of a small number of Renaissance women writers; particularly relevant to my discussion is her inaugural chapter, «Halting the Traffic of Women: Theoretical Foundations» (2005: 3-32). Quilligan’s thesis can be detected in one way or another in most of these analyses: «The interdiction against incest is a constant in all human societies, pivotal at all periods and in all places, however mutually exclusive the specific tabooed permutations and sexual combinations may have been from one culture to the next» (2005: 9).

⁷ For a recent assessment on textual transmission in Cervantes and his contemporaries, see Boutcher (2016).

⁸ A number of pivotal considerations have been recently theorized by Bell (1993). She has argued that, paradoxical as it may seem, incest is actually produced and maintained by social order in a male-dominated society (1993: 57).

writings, as has been thoroughly documented in recent times.⁹ As Richard A. McCabe (2002) has argued, its centrality to all human relationships and the mutual reflection of familial politics and the patriarchal state made incest a powerful metaphor for the ambivalence of all concepts of natural authority, and for different manifestations of social and cultural conflict. Influence, co-authorship, and plagiarism, for instance, placed early modern Spanish writers in a creative proximity considered by some as *incestuos*, at a time in which biological or reproductive tropes like childbearing, swaddling, miscarrying, wet-nursing, and midwifing became common currency when depicting the cultural field and its internal dynamics.

However, incest also connected to the political sphere. If, on the one hand, the practice was considered the vice of the untutored and uncultured, on the other hand its fictional renderings mirrored, and in some cases critiqued, the weakening endogamy of the Spanish monarchy in a century that paradoxically experienced increasing social hybridity and miscegenation. The motto of the Habsburg dynasty—*Alii bella gerant. Tu, felix Austria, nube* («let others fight in wars but you, merry Habsburgs, get married»)—exacerbated the tendency towards endogamy. The results for its last monarch, Charles II (1665-1700), were disastrous, as he was severely sick throughout his short life and died without an heir. His ancestry was nothing but a tangled sequence of royal marriages, supporting the genetic argument that inbreeding produces defective offspring: his father, Philip IV, was the uncle of his mother, Mariana of Austria; his great-grandfather, Philip II, was also uncle of his great-grandmother, Anne of Austria; and his grandmother, Mary Anne of Austria, was also his aunt. As a result, Charles II's quotient of consanguinity (0.25%) was the same as that of the child of two siblings.

This institutional crisis did not go unnoticed for the writers of the time. Although novelized incest has traditionally been tied in Spain to its Romantic period,¹⁰ culminating decades later in novels such as Eduardo Zamacois's *Incesto* (1900), an examination of its intellectual background reveals changing concepts of natural law and consequent reassessments of classical tradition taking place two centuries earlier. The Italian influence of Giovanni Boccaccio and later *novellieri* such as Matteo Bandello laid the ground for new perspectives on the incest taboo.¹¹ The uncertainty and secrecy surrounding its commission—traits that the Spanish Baroque inherited and skillfully exploited—were partly responsible for its fertile narrative genealogy. The Bible (Leviticus 18: 20) had already condemned it, with exceptions like the marriage between Abraham and his half-sister Sarah

⁹ On the relation of incest to natural law in English Renaissance and Restoration drama, see McCabe (2002); on the father-daughter relationship in playwrights like Shakespeare, see Ford (2017); on the ties between incest and specific monarchs like Henry VIII and James I, see Boehrer (1992). On the construction of incest in early modern Spanish tragedy, see Álvarez Sellers (1997); Sáez has tied aesthetics with law when writing that «la presencia del incesto produce un efecto catártico que favorece la función moralizante [...], un valor reiterado en los debates sobre la licitud del teatro» («the presence of incest triggers a cathartic effect that favors the moralizing function [...], an asset highlighted in the debates on the lawfulness of theater») (2013: 625). The treatment of incest in Calderón de la Barca—the Baroque playwright who most thoroughly explored the subject—was first tackled by Rodríguez López-Vázquez (1980), and has been lately revisited by Delgado Morales (2001), Giles (2011), and Intersimone (2014).

¹⁰ See Sebold (1973: 669-670). The sublime nature of some Spanish *tragedias de incesto* fascinated a number of English and German poets. On November 16, 1819, commenting on the lines «Si sangre sin fuego hiera / ¿qué hará sangre con fuego?» («If blood without fire wounds, / what would blood with fire do?»), uttered by Amnón in Calderón de la Barca's *Los cabellos de Absalom*, Percy Bysshe Shelley wrote in a letter to Maria Gisborne that «incest is, like many other *incorrect* things, a very poetical circumstance» (1912: 749).

¹¹ There is ample bibliography on the subject. On the specific case of Boccaccio and Guevara, see Giordano Gramegna (1988).

(Genesis 20: 11-12), and the story of Lot's daughters, who seduced their father and bore his sons Moab (Hebrew «for from the father») and Ben-Ammi («son of my people») (Genesis 19). This particular episode was immortalized by Renaissance and Baroque artists such as Lucas van Leyden (1530), Jan Massys (1565), Peter Paul Rubens (*ca.* 1610), Hendrick Goltzius (1616) and Abraham Bloemaert (1630), releasing a problematic tension between the elegance of its visual elements and the inevitable abjection stemming from its contents. But, perhaps most importantly, these and many other portraits of the era ultimately revealed a fascinating phenomenon shared by the pieces that I will examine in this article. If in these visual renditions there was a gradual erasure of their Biblical references in order to better interrogate the shame brought over by incest, its narrative iterations followed a similar trajectory in which the contextual parameters were secondary to the agonizing dilemmas experienced by their characters. As a result, certain cues in these Biblical paintings, such as the burning cities, the allusions to drunkenness and the different symbols of lust in the form of animals and food, gradually lost their prominence much like specific settings like the urban *milieu* did in the Spanish novels of incest.

Seen as both a crime and a sin, incest was severely punished in the Iberian Middle Ages.¹² In its early stages, the Church defined incest as «*accessus carnalis consanguineorum, vel affinem intra gradus ab Ecclesia prohibitos*», and first punished it with excommunication in the Council of Elvira (*ca.* 300).¹³ Subsequent councils, like the Second Council of Toledo (517), the First Council of Lérida (546), and the Second Council of Barcelona (599), constantly harped on the problem of reinforcing these laws. The ecclesiastical jurists were mostly concerned with marital incest, and soon established the degrees in the canon law of what was allowed in marriage. The Fourth Lateran Council (1215) determined that marriages should be celebrated in church, but did not prohibit clandestine unions. In Castile, Alfonso X dealt extensively with the subject in pieces like *Cantiga* 17, addressing in the influential *Siete Partidas* (Seven-part code, 1256-1265) the anxiety provoked by incest in a society in which infanticide and the abandonment of children were endemic.¹⁴ Scholars like John Boswell (1982) have demonstrated how the fear of incest as the result of not recognizing one's daughter was prevalent since Roman times and ended up as a literary topic in early modern Europe.¹⁵ As Richard A. McCabe has written, the position of the Popes in subsequent decades was erratic. A figure like Cardinal Juan de Torquemada believed that Levitical prohibitions retained the force of divine law «despite the granting of occasional dispensations, for to dispense in the case of

¹² See Lacarra Lanz (2010) and Chicote (1988). Gutiérrez Esteve (1978) analyzes four ballads—*Delgadina*, *Silvana*, *Blancaflor*, and *Tamar*—in which incest appears. As Severino González Rivas indicated, the punishments varied according to the different types of transgression and the degree that separated those who sinned. Contrary to its presence in the Middle Ages, incest rarely appears in early modern poetry; Colón Calderón (2006: 156-159) has examined the ambiguous nature of Catalina Clara Ramírez de Guzmán's «Soneto a su hermano Don Pedro» («Sonnet to her brother Don Pedro»).

¹³ See Brundage (1987: 362).

¹⁴ On the motif of the flight from the incestuous father in Medieval ballads, see Francomano (2007); for the British tradition, see Archibald (2001: 147-183). Gutierre Díez de Games's *El Victorial* (*ca.* 1435) tells in the 57th chapter the story of the widowed Duke of Guienne's love for his daughter, who resembled her dead mother. On incest in Medieval books of chivalry, see the first part of Gracia's study (1991); on its presence in Medieval French literature, see Gravidal.

¹⁵ See Boswell (1982: 96, 107, 161, and 371-375).

privileged individuals is to recognise the general validity of the law in question. The matter, however, continued to prove controversial, and theologians were often forced to alter their opinions, as the precedents established earlier in the century became known» (2002: 49-50). Given all these precedents, how would writers of fiction approach a phenomenon that was so intimately embedded in the national ethos, sometimes even as a salvific feat? Renaissance libraries were not lacking in incest plots: the myth of Oedipus had been transmitted through Seneca's homonymous *fabula crepidata*; and Ovid, through the *Heroides* and the *Metamorphoses*, had delved into the topic with characters such as Phaedra, Philomena, and Myrrha, influencing the transmission of some hagiographic stories gathered in *Flos Sanctorum*.

The Council of Trent reconfirmed the incest prohibitions issued by the Fourth Lateran Council, with the exception of relaxing kinship rules established through godparenthood and extra-marital affairs. Its decree on the reformation of marriage titled *Tametsi* (November 11, 1563) determined the first and second degrees of consanguinity (between parents and children, and among siblings respectively) as the impediments that banned or dissolved marriage, unless it was among great princess and/or for a public cause.¹⁶ At the Council, there was resistance against the abolition of clandestine marriage despite heavy lobbying by the kings of Spain and France for a reform that would make parental consent mandatory. Until the Council and perhaps beyond, as Jutta Sperling has written in a recent article, informal domestic partnerships were common form in most Catholic countries, especially in the Iberian Peninsula. But church politics changed significantly after Trent, as indicated by a greater tolerance of «cousin marriages» and the recognition of dowry exchange. Endogamy, as Sperling identifies in three pivotal stages,

was the order of the day, then, with non-dotal marriage among kin replacing dowry exchange among unrelated social equals. Post-Tridentine papal administrators promoted—perhaps even initiated?—this trend by granting marital dispensations at exponentially increased rates to couples who planned to marry within the previously forbidden fourth degree of kinship (that is, among couples who shared at least one out of eight possible sets of great-great-grandparents), so long as they conformed to the new Tridentine requirements of publicity and in-church celebration [...] The church agreed to merge its formerly couple-oriented and private concept of marriage based on spiritual friendship with the laity's notion of marriage as kinship-oriented and public, and as a contract regulating property relations. Also, the church mitigated the enforcement of kinship prohibitions, that both clandestine marriages and dowry exchange were meant to achieve, albeit through different means. [...] The Holy Penitentiary thus followed the pre-Tridentine church's judicial practice of fostering already existing relationships (*favor matrimonii*), in line with its policy of regarding the fight for monogamy as more important than the battle against «incest». (2002: 74, 78, 86)

The consequence of all these measures was that, ironically, after the Council the notion of marriage became less stable in countries like Spain. Following the dispositions established in *Tametsi*, the Jesuit theologian Tomás Sánchez (1550-1610) wrote the famous manual *De sancto matrimonii sacramento disputationum: Tomi tres* (Antwerp, 1602), which for centuries would be

¹⁶ See Morales Tenorio (2010: 5, n9); Brundage (1982: 562-567).

considered the primary authority on the matter. Although informal domestic partnerships were targeted with criminalization by church and state alike, incest was not considered among the worst offenses by confessors. With sodomy and bestiality topping the hierarchy in their manuals, incest was deemed a lesser crime, paired in gravity to adultery and rape.¹⁷ One of the delicate caveats that was later reflected in early modern fiction was that of ignorance on the part of those who committed incest, which opened the door to the possibility of pardon, or of a more lenient punishment. In an illuminating essay, Eukene Lacarra Lanz (2010) has summarized all these concerns when discussing a phenomenon that sparked heated debates on its religious, philosophical and legal parameters: on the one hand, there was a clear pedagogic goal, which led its readers to confession in order to abide by the guidelines established by the Fourth Lateran Council that required it annually; on the other hand, one must also consider the concerns triggered by canon and civil laws that condemned marriage among relatives, and that could impose punishments of excommunication, exile and even death. But, most importantly, she writes, «el éxito de estas historias radicaba en que podían también servir de advertencia al peligro de abandonar a los hijos pequeños y darlos a criar a otras familias, ya que la ignorancia del parentesco podía llevar a cometer incesto sin saberlo» («the success of these stories stemmed from the fact that they could serve as a reminder of the dangers of abandoning children or leaving them with strangers, since this unawareness of family ties could lead to unintended incest») (2010: 19). This *unawareness of family ties* constitutes one of the most useful narrative tools in the novels that I will examine here—and certainly one of the factors that could save or sink the chances of getting published. While *unawareness* inevitably points to a dramatic genealogy of fatal encounters going all the way back to Antiquity, the word *parentesco* allowed for a reflection on what was its acceptable degree when taking the leap, either deliberately or unknowingly, into an incestuous relationship. If early modern Spanish theater put the emphasis on the former, the novel did so on the latter, updating incest to modern times through different scenarios triggered by new forms of domesticity and family dynamics.

NOVELIZING INCEST

The period of Spanish cultural history when the novel emerged witnessed the advent of a burgeoning print culture and a realignment of the categories of class. The genre enjoyed unparalleled success in the seventeenth century, either independently or as a short piece gathered in a collection. Although it frequently dealt with different variations of love, honor, leisure, and friendship, it also explored unspeakable acts like incest, rape, pederasty, and even bestiality. Portrayals of actual, averted, or imagined incest in the early modern novel reflected changes in kinship organization that were taking place with the emergence of new social structures and representational forms.¹⁸ If the notion of *family*, which in the Iberian Peninsula varied ethnically and geographically, was conceived for

¹⁷ Clavero (1990: 75-76).

¹⁸ See Martínez Camino (1996: 33); Romero-Díaz (2002: 23-56).

the most part as the community sharing the same quarters,¹⁹ the world of the printers, as Anne Cayuela (2005: 53-55) has argued in her survey of Alonso Pérez de Montalbán's collaborators, was highly endogamous. As a number of surveys and analyses of different printing families has revealed in recent years, this situation created a «system of artificial kin with its attendant social support network» that allowed for an «intense fraternization» through the act of godparenting.²⁰ The novel that dealt with incest took advantage of these historical realities to tease the waters of the permissible not only by capturing a specific familial bond, but also by proposing it as another form of kinship. This resulted in an exercise in relativism, as the question of degree became pivotal in the legal consequences of the act itself as well as in its production and dissemination in relation to other novels, sometimes printed in the same collection. But, as the following stories remind us, incest appeared in different forms and with multiple nuances. At the dawn of the famous ten-year ban on novels and comedies decreed in 1625 by the Junta de Reformación (Council of Reformation) in consultation with the all-powerful Count-Duke of Olivares,²¹ the writers of fiction in Philip IV's Spain faced a number of questions that, as scholars such as Manuel Peña Díaz (2015) and Virgilio Pinto Crespo (1982) have examined, determined the fate of their work: Could cousins get married? Should intent be a deciding legal factor when building a character or a plot? Did the existence of offspring make an incestuous relationship more deserving of condemnation?

These are three particular concerns that tie the novels examined in this essay. Inspired by the popularity of Cervantes's *Novelas ejemplares* (reprinted eighteen times in the seventeenth century), the short story enjoyed unparalleled success in the following decades. Alonso Pérez de Montalbán's commercial instincts made him the most important bookseller of his era, contributing to twenty of the seventy-four editions or re-editions of short story collections between 1613 and 1645. In 1624, his son Juan published *Sucesos y prodigios de amor en ocho novelas ejemplares* (*Prodigious events of love in eight exemplary novellas*), which was translated into Italian, English, French, and Dutch, and was reprinted twenty-four times in the seventeenth century, thus becoming the most successful short story collection of the time. Two of its stories explored incestuous relationships: In *Los primos amantes* (*The cousins-lovers*) its protagonist Laura is expected to marry the rich Octavio, but she falls in love with her cousin Lisardo. In order to escape from the «tyranny» of her father, who embodies the old social order, she elopes with her cousin: «aconsejose con su deseo, que la decía se pusiese en manos de su primo, pues de aquí se seguía a vivir con gusto» («she followed her desire, which told her to put herself in the hands of her cousin, so she could live joyfully») (1987: 117; italics are mine).

Although the act of fleeing was not particularly new to the genre, the added layer of an endogamous relationship tied the piece to social and cultural parameters that played an important role in the demarcation between self and other, and between the honorable and the indecorous. Geographical displacements resulting from marital decisions were a common challenge to authorities, and had become a widespread concern in some parts of Europe. Elopements, in fact, had been one

¹⁹ See Chacón Jiménez (1990: 22-23).

²⁰ Griffin (2005: 208; see also 17). On the fortunes of foreign printers and typesetters in Spain such as the Loe and Cromberger families, see Griffin (1988).

²¹ On the details and consequences of this ban, see Moll (1974).

of the topics of discussion at the Council of Trent, as Sperling reminds us: «Demands for the abolition of clandestine marriage were particularly strong among delegates from countries like France and Spain, intent on persecuting ‘elopements’ and establishing the kind of agnatic inheritance and reproductive control Italians had achieved through dowry exchange and statutory law» (2002: 75). This story, however, does not focus on the financial aspects of this love affair, but rather on the complex nature of desire. The *gusto* that Pérez de Montalbán referred to in the aforementioned passage constitutes the transformative trait in this novel of modern sensibilities, in which lovers are led by a pleasure that could very well exemplify what Michel Foucault (1990) called a new «logic of concupiscence» (1990: 78). *Los primos amantes*, in fact, delves into this forbidden love that is eventually sanctioned by the figure of Lisardo’s father, a self-made, rich *indiano* who clashes in his «modern» views with his brother’s understanding of familial boundaries, all the while capturing the popular belief that divorce, polygamy, and incest were rampant in the New World. Although the theme of the novel may sound undoubtedly audacious, if not controversial, to contemporary readers, the weight of the story rests not so much on incestuous lust, but rather on the clash between greed and love, between natural law and personal agency, and ultimately between different forms of fulfilling desire. Lisardo’s father manages to appease his brother’s rage, bringing a happy outcome to a piece that was reprinted several times in subsequent editions and miscellanies because of the acceptable degree of consanguinity of its protagonists.

Some of the questions posed by Pérez de Montalbán in *Los primos amantes* were further explored in a piece with a more ambiguous title, *La mayor confusión* (*The greatest confusion*), a story of double incest in which the protagonist unknowingly marries a woman who proves to be both his daughter and sister. The story is set in Philip IV’s Madrid, and contains all the typical elements of a *novela cortesana*, such as mortal duels, epistolary exchanges, nocturnal serenades, and leisurely strolls in the city’s promenades. Nothing, in fact, appears to be particularly distinct about this urban portrayal, as I suggested earlier when commenting the Biblical paintings of incest. It is, however, an innovative cast of characters that provides, once again, the necessary dose of novelty and appeal for the reading public. The protagonist, Casandra, ties together what could almost be considered two different stories. Initially, she commits incest with her cousin Gerardo, narrated by Pérez de Montalbán, according to Luigi Giuliani, «con una buscada ambigüedad» («with careful ambiguity») (1992: 137, n168), using Classical imagery and highlighting the contrast between white (lost purity) and red (spilled blood). This episode and all its surrounding conundrums could have constituted a short story in itself. However, a new plot develops when Casandra falls madly in love with her son Félix, thus rendering the previous pages somewhat irrelevant, as they are overshadowed by the magnitude of the following episodes.

The second part of the novel thus delves fully into the incest taboo featuring a number of secondary characters and (the now customary) geographical displacements. One night, Casandra manages to sneak into the bed of her maid Lisena, who happens to be Félix’s lover, and has now become an accomplice of her employer. Pretending to be her, Casandra sleeps with her son, gets pregnant, and delivers a baby named Diana, who is adopted as an orphan in order to erase all traces of suspicion. When Félix returns home after fourteen years at the service of the Crown, he unknowingly falls in love with his own daughter. A horrified Casandra tries at all costs to stop the courtship: she orders Diana to enter a convent and pays two thousand ducats to a former lover of

Félix's named Fulgencia to denounce him for falsely promising her marriage. As a result, Félix is forced to live in exile—in this case, Peru—for a year and a half, before returning and marrying Diana. Incest triggers in this novel two opposing but simultaneous processes: on the one hand, it signals to Casandra that she has begun her own demise. Pérez de Montalbán writes that, when she learns about the unstoppable attraction between Félix and Diana, «se quedó difunta» («she felt dead inside»), thus starting a slow agony that lasts no less than two years, given that «no ha menester mucha causa quien vive muriendo» («not much is needed to the one who lives dying») (1992: 166). Conversely, incest is portrayed as a generative force that allows Félix and Diana to have several children who simultaneously become, as the author reminds us, siblings and cousins, Félix being grandfather, father, and uncle to his son.²² The piece ends with Casandra's death, and with her son reading a note written by her in which she reveals her daughter's true identity.

All of this would have made the story polemical enough at a time—the early 1620s—of increasing institutional control, but Pérez de Montalbán went a step further. In one last twist, a troubled Félix asks for advice from a Jesuit and some theologians at the universities of Alcalá and Salamanca, who encourage him to keep living with Diana, «pues él ni ella habían tenido culpa del delito» («since neither one was [deliberately] guilty») (1992: 163-164). By consulting with a Jesuit, Félix is reaching out to the most influential religious Order in Spain on these matters, and whose guiding written source, as I have indicated above in reference to Tomás Sánchez, solidified their theological prominence. The question posed by Pérez de Montalbán with this unusual outcome, as some critics have argued, is the choice between *amor sensitivo* and *amor racional* and love as a transgressive force that breaks with the social norms of the era. The sanctity of marriage prevails over any other circumstance as long as the sin is kept private, an astute maneuver that allows for a happy resolution without compromising the seminal features of the story. The author is also careful to point out that it is too late for Félix to undo his marriage «porque el cielo les había dado hijos» («because Heaven had given them children»), thus highlighting a divine pardon that brings a happy outcome to the piece (1992: 167). Although its title initially refers to Félix's utter confusion after reading Casandra's posthumous note, I would argue that uncertainty and secrecy are the two features that best define *La mayor confusión* when stressing this notion of concealment. Casandra's final act of manipulation, Rodríguez Cuadros writes, «enfrenta a don Félix con los dos polos de la tragedia: la revelación de lo siniestro familiar oculto en el pasado y, por otro lado, su actualización en una especie de retorno a lo semejante, de espejamiento de su doble, al descubrir estar casado con su hija y hermana» («forces Félix to face both extremes of the tragedy: [on the one hand], the revelation of the familial-bject hidden in the past; and, on the other, its embodiment in a return to the self, in a mirroring of his double when learning that he is married to his daughter and sister») (1987: 55). Casandra is a master of manipulation and revelation whose death balances out the controversial nature of a match made out of incest. In the game of give-and-take that was the craft of the short story in these years of tight vigilance, her death allows this radical form of incest to survive in the public arena.

²² On the tangled progeny that results from these unions, see Armon (1999). She argues that the piece participates «in the project of rewriting or propaganda that accompanied Philip IV's succession to the Spanish throne in 1621» (1999: 412).

Pérez de Montalbán took inspiration from the fourth novella of the collection *Cento Novelle* (as it appeared in the 1562, 1563, 1566, and 1571 editions) published by Francesco Sansovino, although a number of French and Italian sources played a role as well, such as the novella XXIII of Masuccio Salernitano's *Novellino* and the *histoire* XXX of Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptameron*, among others.²³ Aware as he was, being the son of a seasoned bookseller, of the strategic role each story had in a given collection, he placed *La mayor confusión* fourth. Its centrality in the book, along with the dedicatory to his friend and mentor Lope de Vega, is indication of the importance he gave to it and the awareness that this was no ordinary piece. His *Casandra* predated in many ways the incestuous *Casandra* of Lope's *El castigo sin venganza* (*Punishment without revenge*, 1631), written a few years later. Montalbán's concerns were therefore aesthetic and not doctrinal, as he did not consider the contents of this story to be particularly scandalous. Being himself a priest and a Doctor in Theology from the Universidad de Alcalá, he was benefitting from the room for maneuver stemming from the inconclusiveness and disagreements in the Tridentine discussions on incest—and on marriage as a whole. His aim, as a result, was to reflect on the conditions of possibility of such episodes without incurring in any moral judgment. If his friend Miguel de Cervantes had wisely rewritten a few years earlier the (otherwise mild) bed scene of the trickster Loaysa and the married girl Leonora in *El celoso extremeño* (*The jealous man from Extremadura*, 1613), Pérez de Montalbán cautiously avoided all sexual details in the bed scene between mother and son: «Llegó el engañado don Félix y, ajeno de semejante maldad, pensando que estaba en los brazos de una criada, gozó la belleza de su indigna madre, de la cual se despidió arrepentido» («The deceived Félix arrived, and, ignoring such evil, thinking that he was in the arms of a maid, enjoyed the beauty of his unworthy mother, to whom he said farewell in repentance») (1992: 141).

Implicit in Pérez de Montalbán's gesture was the question, in this and subsequent incest plots, of whether the *novela corta* could effectively serve as a suitable genre at a time in which theater was beginning to reap the commercial rewards of a number of successful incest plots—including Pérez de Montalbán's own tragedy *Como padre y como rey* (*As a father and as a king*, 1629).²⁴ Consequently, it was not the private unfolding of incest that worried the censors, but rather the story's ending with a successful marriage as the starting point of a new lineage. After all, the narrator rested his case on the concept of unintentional error, as he was claiming a verdict of equity for his character.²⁵ It was the silence of *Casandra*, hostage to her own fatal flaws, that paradoxically allowed for a double transgression: a forbidden marriage followed by the absolution of its members. *La mayor confusión* must thus be examined not only in its unarguable singularity, but also in relation to the other pieces gathered under a title—*Sucesos y prodigios de amor en ocho novelas ejemplares*—that left the door open to ambiguity. If the words *mayor* and *confusión*, as I indicated earlier, could be interpreted in several ways, the title of the collection was no less ambivalent: was incest thought of as an event (*suceso*), or as an anomaly (*prodigios*)? Was the pairing (*y*) of these two concepts an addition or a disjunction? How was that *amor* to be taken?

²³ It is believed that the piece was written by Giulio Brevio, who published it in his *Prose e rime volgari* (Rome, 1545). See also Bourland (1927: 13).

²⁴ See Sáez (2013), who provides a useful appendix of plays in which incest appears. For a pioneering take on the subject, see Valencia.

²⁵ On the phenomenon of *quaestio aequitatis* in the Spanish Baroque novel, see Rabell (1997: 72).

The text passed the first round of censorship. As part of a favor exchange system that has been well documented,²⁶ Pérez de Montalbán dedicated the piece to Lope de Vega, whose doctrine he had «always suckled» (*a cuyos pechos me he criado siempre*) (1992: 124). In his approval, Lope was careful to establish a father-son relationship with the novelist, praising «la corta experiencia de los tiernos años» («the brief experience of his tender age») and his enormous talent («excelente natural») (1992: 3-4), and helping solidify the image of the young Montalbán as *l'enfant terrible* of the Spanish Parnassus. Some of the dedicatory poems in this section of the collection penned by the writers of Lope's inner circle confirmed this genealogy, all the while providing new notions of authorship. To further blur the distance between authorial voices, Pérez de Montalbán detailed in the dedicatory to Lope that, rather than offering the novel to him, he was simply *returning* it (*restituvo a V. M. como cosa suya [...] más se debe llamar restitución que ofrenda*) (1992: 133; italics are mine). Therefore, if all personal merit was relative, so was, one could argue, all accountability. The piece had been written, the young novelist remarked, by «an ant» («siendo una hormiga») (1992: 133) who was part of a shared endeavor, but also by someone with very limited stature, standing, one could argue, on the shoulders of giants. As a result, *La mayor confusión* was introduced to the reader as a printed good in which many hands had a specific degree of agency, with Lope de Vega as the «ocean» from which everything stemmed and to whom everything returned («volver al mar lo que salió de su abundancia») (1993: 133). The complexity of its presentation no doubt responded to the existence of a delicate taboo, which had to be conveyed with a well-defined strategy, both fictional and material.

The theme of the novel thus mirrored the structure of the literary field and of this particular commercial endeavor. In what could be deemed today a conflict of interest bordering on the endogamous, Lope approved it as a story that was anchored in reality («cuyo caso tiene mucha parte de verdad» «whose case has a great deal of truth») (1992: 126), suddenly opening up a small crevasse between reality and imagination. The second round, however, was not that lenient, and Pérez de Montalbán ran afoul of the Inquisition in what it is still considered one of the most fascinating editorial conundrums of the century. The piece was subject to a number of immediate changes: in the 1624 edition, Félix was completely unaware of the kinship ties that united him to Diana; in the 1628 edition, Casandra's actions held no credibility whatsoever, thus confusing the plot and its outcome. In the 1633 edition, Pérez de Montalbán was forced to make three major changes, including a new ending that killed Félix and sent Diana to a convent.²⁷ In any case, all of these hurdles did not seem to diminish his reputation among his ecclesiastical peers—a year later, he was appointed Notary of the Inquisition.

With the boundaries of fiction newly tested, the genre yielded some other fascinating examples of intra-familial desire. Gonzalo de Céspedes y Meneses narrated a love affair between

²⁶ There is ample bibliography on this phenomenon. For a recent reassessment that covers a wide range of examples (including some striking coincidences in their work), see Laplana Gil (1996).

²⁷ It was only in the 1723 edition that its ending was expurgated. See Simón Díaz (1948), Giuliani (1992: xlv-xlvi), Dixon (1958: 17-18), and Rey Hazas (1995: 452, n19; 453). Additional details on its institutional fortunes have been provided by Rey Hazas (1995: 447), Dixon (1958), and Morales Tenorio (2010).

two cousins in *Los dos Mendozas* (*The two Mendozas*, 1623); Alonso de Castillo Solórzano did so between Julia and her stepson Anselmo in *El premio de la virtud* (*The prize of virtue*, 1631); the passion between siblings was the theme of Andrés del Prado's *El señalado* (*The chosen one*, 1663); and in Cristóbal Lozano's *Soledades de la vida y desengaños del mundo* (*Solitudes of Life, and Disenchantments of the World*, 1672), one of the protagonists of the «Soledad segunda» fell in love with his stepmother and killed his own father, prompting his wife to commit suicide in despair. Lastly, one of the most remarkable examples of these later stages in the development of the genre was penned by a woman. In 1660 Mariana de Carvajal (1600-1664) narrated a series of scenes of averted incest in *La industria vence desdenes* (*Ability vanquishes disdain*), a short story that embodied some of the most audacious writing of the second third of the century. The novel, the seventh in the collection *Navidades en Madrid* (*Christmas in Madrid*), staged a love affair that contained within it a number of fascinating family dynamics, with the figure of the pure and strikingly beautiful teenage boy («saçonado muchacho» [1999: 469]) Jacinto as the object of female and male desire. Evangelina Rodríguez Cuadros has spoken of an «extraño espejamiento, entre edípico y pederasta» («a bizarre mirroring, halfway between the Oedipal and the pederastic») (1999: 105) of his uncle Pedro, a priest.

However, the most comprehensive treatment of incest of this period, and one in which religious orders also took center stage, was penned by the writer-soldier Luis de Guevara. In 1683, the Catalan printer Joan Roca published his collection *Intercadencias de la calentura de amor* (*Irregular pulse rates of love fever*). As had been the case with Pérez de Montalbán, Roca placed the novels in a deliberate order. In this case, the sequence mirrored the pulsations of love, so that a highly charged story was followed by a mild one, followed by another *calentura*, and so on. In order to «vindicate the rather frivolous content of the Spanish *novelle* with quotations from serious Neo-Latin and Latin writers», as Simon Vosters (1997: 320) indicated in a masterful study, Guevara stated in his Prologue that love manifested itself in seven ways according to authors like Maximus Tyrius and Horace. Love, he wrote, appeared as a disease, as an incurable affliction given that a lover does not want to be cured, but also as a self-inflicted wound, as a fever, as fire, as a feverish paleness, and finally as an irregular pulse. In this deduction, Guevara moved from the general to the particular, as opposed to what a physician should have done, offering a very unique and original design for a short-story collection whose common thread, I would argue, was the examination of the effects of desire upon the body.

The reason for this reversed order was the justification of the *Intercadencias* title by means of a climax. As part of this sequence of climaxes, two of these pulse rates came in the form of incest schemes, *La porfía hasta vencer* (*Persist until victory*) and *Los hermanos amantes* (*The sibling-lovers*). The first one returned to the topic of father-daughter incest, and was defined by Roca as a «suceso próspero, not trágico» («a prosperous event, not a tragic one») (1952: 275) on its opening page. In it, the young Juana gets pregnant with Félix's baby. Her father Pedro offers her in marriage, but before Félix has the chance to respond, they hear a baby cry. Juana pretends it is someone else's, and so the little Felisarda is raised in a nearby cottage (*un cigarral cercano*). Thirteen years later, Felisarda becomes the object of desire of her father and of don Carlos, Juana's cousin. The question here relates to class: Juana wants Carlos to marry her daughter, but Pedro, who still doesn't know the real identity of the girl, prohibits it on the grounds that she is a commoner who was found in the

field. After a number of adventures reminiscent of a *comedia de enredo* between the four main characters, the truth is revealed and proper marriages—between Juana and Félix, and between Carlos and Felisarda—are arranged. Nature, the other defining theme of the story, plays an intermediary role throughout. The secrecy of childbirth has nature «as a midwife», says the narrator, and the baby is portrayed as the pearl inside a shell. The *cigarral*, as in the case of Mariana de Carvajal, becomes the space of leisure and possibility, and one whose natural innocence contrasts with the pollution brought over by incest.

The piece is also a meditation on the fraught relationship between language and desire. Guevara reflects on the effects of silence on the body but also on the ways in which body language can express feelings of guilt and shame within the family structure. At first, it is the lexicon of love that drives the plot in order to justify the existence of an incestuous relationship: «¡O, cuán mucho habla por los ojos el amor!» («Oh, how much love speaks through the eyes!») (1952: 276). However, Guevara's true concern, as Vosters indicated, is with the somatic effects of desire, here termed «calentura del cuerpo» («bodily fever»). As a result, all references to honor and decorum are gradually replaced by the immediacy of lust: «esto tiene de diferente la calentura del amor de la del cuerpo, que esta suele salir a la boca y aquella a los ojos» («this is the difference between love-fever and bodily fever, the latter is released through the mouth, the former through the eyes») (1952: 285). The limitations of a self-imposed silence on Juana's body are also the mechanisms of power resulting from her own secret, given that «tenía en su poder a la causa de todos estos disgustos» («she had in her power the cause of all of these misdeeds») (1952: 301). The story thus becomes a domestic tragedy in which the consequences of the intrigue are so farfetched, so incomprehensible that they become a «barbarismo del amor» («barbarism of love») (1952: 294) and a «dicción [...] de maligna naturaleza» («a speech [...] of evil nature») (1952: 317).

The last piece examined in the essay, *Los hermanos amantes*, took matters much further. Set in a city «de las que sirven de preciosa margarita a la corona de España» («one of those [cities] that, as a precious daisy, embellish the Crown of Spain») (1952: 65), it featured a love triangle among the siblings Elisa, Fernando, and Baltasar, in which «no reparaba mucho el amor en los sagrados del parentesco» («love did not care about the sacred nature of kinship») (1952: 88). Elisa is initially portrayed as an unremarkable upper-class urbanite leading a decorous life. Guevara also introduces the character Pedro de Ponce, a friend of the family, whose identity Fernando usurps in order to sleep with his sister as an «imaginado don Pedro» (1952: 84). In order to counterbalance the nature of his desire, Fernando dignifies his persona and his pursuit with mythological references, calling himself «imitador de Amón» («imitator of Amnon»), and peppering his discourse with mentions of Myrrha and Semiramis. He is also defined by Guevara as a «vario Proteo» (1952: 80) to explain his fluid personality as he switches between his persona and that of Pedro's. However, the imagery soon turns into something less erudite and much more immediate. Using the image of the fortress just like Cervantes had done in *El celoso extremeño*, Guevara situates desire in the «battlefield» of domesticity: «tremoló de don Fernando el estandarte sobre la desmantelada fortaleza» («Don Fernando's banner trembled over the dismantled fortress») (1952: 81).²⁸ A few pages are then devoted to the

²⁸ Little has been written on the Cervantine case. On traces of incest and rape in three of his exemplary novels, see Fine (2014: 86-110).

blissful life of the clandestine lovers before the plot takes a new turn when Fernando decides to become a priest in order to dispel all suspicion. However, he can only take minor orders, since he is a New Christian, with two «ugly blemishes» pointing to Jewish and Moorish blood: «deseando las mayores [órdenes], lo que no permitió el cielo, por ser muy sabido que era hijo de padres judaizantes, y por tales castigados, aunque la fama también publicaba serlo de cristianos nuevos de los que salieron de Granada, y por estos *dos feos lunares* no pudo conseguirlo» («wishing to enter into higher orders, which Heaven did not permit, being as he was the son of judaizers, and as such condemned; although rumor also spoke of him descending from new Christian blood from Granada, and because of *these two blemishes* he was not allowed to») (1952: 79; italics are mine). And although the narrative will repeat expressions like «amores tan viciosos» («vicious passions») (1952: 80), and «cortar las raíces de aquel cáncer que tan en último esfuerzo le puso el corazón» («sever the roots of that cancer that made her heart ache») (1952: 79), the household will soon welcome the other sibling—this one «ilegítimo» (1952: 79)—into the triangulation. While living with Fernando, Elisa falls in love with Baltasar, and her «pulso del amor» (1952: 87) renders her speechless: «enmudecíale la vergüenza de la torpeza, y como es calentura de amor de no salir a la boca, en breve se sintió mala» («the shame of turpitude stole her speech, and since love fever does not escape the mouth, soon she felt ill») (1952: 83). Her impulse to incest can be interpreted as a desire for stasis, as what Elizabeth Barnes has called «a refusal to circulate one's body, one's blood, even one's attention outside the sphere of one's own family» (2002: 4). However, such stasis results in a saturated space that soon turns sickly. Much like cancer, secrecy is the disease, the mastering of the flesh that slowly begins to kill a torn Elisa who «cumplía con don Fernando por la costumbre, y adoraba a don Baltasar por el amor. De día lo pasaba con éste, y de noche sufría los abrazos de aquel» («performed with Fernando out of habit, and adored Baltasar out of love. She spent the day with the latter, whereas at night she suffered the hugs of the former») (1952: 89). When she becomes pregnant and Fernando asks her with threats: «¿de quién estás tú preñada, infame aborto de nuestro linaje?» («who is the father of your baby, fatal miscarriage of our lineage?») (1952: 94), she hides behind a silence that embodies her agency in the domestic realm as symptomatic of a perverse form of family structure. Silence, once again, becomes a form of domination. As a result, Baltasar and Fernando «estaban *colgados de la boca* de Elisa, que era la que había de condenar o librar» («they were hanging from Elisa's mouth, which was in charge of sentencing or absolving») (1952: 95; italics are mine). The image is extraordinarily fertile: the incestuous brothers are pawns in her panopticon-like view of the household, as they helplessly swing, waiting for the verdict. The different family blemishes—Hebrew, Muslim, bastard—add the burden of the past of these sinners who are hanged, waiting to expire, as their sins are made public. Elisa, it could be argued, is simultaneously judge and victim: the *deus ex machina*, the insatiable body, and the ultimate story-teller; for if her siblings are left anxiously hanging, so is the reader.

Los hermanos amantes is a story of fallibility, in which incest is portrayed as both fatal and familiar: «siempre nuestra voluntad abraza lo menos útil, y quien ha de tropezar, *de ordinario* tropieza en lo peor» («our will always embraces the worst, and those who are prone to stumble, *frequently* do so in the extreme») (1952: 90). *Lo peor* appears here in the form of Elisa's cursed nature, which shifts from her incestuous tendencies to the ruin of a name, of a lineage that is defined as racially tainted. The author moves from the image of the viper to that of cancer, only to finish

with *aborto*—not *abortion* per se, but rather *monster*. The whole story is conceived as a long gestation, as a *crescendo* with a fatal outcome. But not everything is figurative language, as Guevara also manages to take the reader to domains rarely seen at the time, particularly regarding the explicitness with which inner thoughts are revealed. While pregnant, Elisa «deseaba que fuera víbora lo que alimentaba en sus entrañas que antes de salir se las partiera y quedara sin vida; tal vez le pesaba de no haber hecho diligencias para abortar» («wished it was a viper what she was bearing, a viper that would shatter her womb and kill her before giving birth; she probably regretted not having done enough to have an abortion [at the right time]») (1952: 90). Characters and readers are left hanging, *colgados de la boca*, since Elisa's words can break the pact of narrative, which is none other than the family pact. The double murder (that of Pedro and Elisa) with which the story ends frees Fernando and Baltasar from their sister's upper hand, from «haber de estar sujetos a su lengua toda la vida» («being hostage to her word for the rest of their lives») (1952: 99). Elisa's death at the hands of her brothers marks the point where the novel must retreat if it wants to succeed. This gesture is significant when read in the context of its era, as has been recently highlighted by Maureen Quilligan: «When women are not entirely traded out, that is, when they remain in relation to their natal families, especially their brothers, their endogamous position may allow them to exercise immense political power» (2005: 24). Elisa, the siren of the Classical tradition who had blinded her brother Fernando with her schemes («deslumbraba [...] con sus melindres») (1952: 90-91), dies in order not only to be stripped of this power, but also to bury the family secret.

CONCLUSIONS

Taking sexuality as a network that joins together physical sensations and pleasure while triggering resistance, a generation of short story writers led by Pérez de Montalbán reflected on family dynamics in novel ways. Part of what made these pieces so attractive for the reading public is that they were beginning to signal that the deployment of sexuality emerged within the confines of a family alliance. Incest was conceived not as a biological risk, but as a fluid and shifting limit on endogamy, feared because in its excessive forms it confused kinship and alliance. These stories not only took advantage of the blind spots laid bare after Trent and its concerns on monogamy over endogamy, but they also offered a counter-narrative of the exemplary novel in which the family could sometimes become, in Foucault's sage observation, «the germ of all the misfortunes of sex» (1990: 108). Whether the plots featured committed or averted incest, and whether the weight of the story rested on gender, class, provenance, or ethnic background, as I have argued through this selection of texts, novelists like Pérez de Montalbán and Guevara portrayed the space of the family as the setting in which to witness incestuous relationships that allowed for the lineage to grow undisturbed. Their incest schemes ultimately examined the suitability of the short story collection as a language with which to reflect on the reach of intra-familial desire in its relation to the medical, religious, and legal parameters of the time. The conversation between these novelists and their readers—including their censors—revealed that it was only when made public that the practice was subject to condemnation. It also indicated that the short story was to be read and appreciated in relation to its peers in the collection or miscellany to which it belonged, as part of a design that was highly sensitive to the reader's tolerance and expectations. The book was thus the author's progeny,

and his or her descendants gathered in it displayed varied degrees of misbehavior, with incest plots at the very edge of the permissible in the ever-shifting dialogue between fiction and the law: «Whenever desire of any kind is opposed by prohibition, wherever skepticism erodes received doctrines», writes Richard A. McCabe, «the theme of incest may emerge as a powerful dramatic focus for the resulting conflict, since it involves the very nature of man as a political animal—“political”, that is, in the widest sense of the term: the attitude of the *polis* to the proper relationship between governors and governed, law and licence» (2002: 25). The rise of the early modern Spanish novel thus cannot be uncoupled from a certain degree of endogamy: for if the dynamics of the family sometimes echoed those of the state, the forces at work within the book also mirrored the incestuous alliances of the cultural field.

In addition, by expanding the catalog of forbidden relationships beyond the traditional Oedipal conflict, the construction of incest helped the genre perfect a number of its formative traits. The device of suspense, the construction of catharsis provoked by anagnorisis, the dialogue with the medical realm, and the erudite symbolism brought about by mythology with names such as Casandra (as the person who prophesies doom) and Diana (as the chased object of desire) all gave these pieces an aura of prestige and erudition. They were also symptomatic of an era that conceived them as radical expressions of misogyny, as a resurfacing of ethnic resentment towards the Moor, the Jew and the Amerindian, even as veiled critiques on the centuries-old practice of endogamy on the part of the monarchy and the nobility. But when it came to its portrayal in other societal groups, what incest achieved touched not only on the political, but also on very specific notions of individual agency. By adapting the myth to contemporary society, the novel freed incest from tradition in ways that early modern Spanish tragedies could not. It made it relevant not only as a social ill, but also as a useful tool to stretch the boundaries of fiction, bringing to the fore allegedly marginal patterns of behavior, particularly in regards to the ties between natural law and social custom. Paradoxically, the short story collection borrowed from the dramatic forms from which it distanced itself strategies to skillfully administer emotion: incest plots could only be deployed when surrounded by normative relationships, much like catharsis, as Lope proved onstage with his own Casandra, required a careful timing in which delicate transitions were paramount. Nearness, after all, defined many of these dynamics outside the fictional realm: Baroque writers were both the product and the co-creators of a ‘culture of proximity’ that went beyond the geographical, reaching, as we have seen, the familial and the professional²⁹—such was the case, for instance, of the brothers Bartolomé and Lupercio de Argensola, perhaps the most notorious case of shared endeavors, which has resulted in shifting attributions of their poetry.³⁰ This proximity, so rich in symbols and metaphors, allowed early modern writers to think of endogamy not as an end, but rather as a means to reflect on different societal forms and the role of fiction within them.

I have argued in this essay that the incest taboo is relative to time, representing «the mysterious, vexing, sometimes ungovernable but always undeniable power of kinship ties and their

²⁹ See, for example, García Santo-Tomás (2004: 73-186).

³⁰ For an interesting parallel in English literature, that of Sir Philip Sydney and his sister Mary Herbert translating the Psalms together, see Quilligan (2005: 8).

widespread ramifications for individuals and society at large».³¹ More than a century has passed since Otto Rank (1992) published his pioneering study on incest in literature, in which he devoted a number of illuminating pages to pieces by Lope de Vega and Cervantes, thus paving the way for later studies that have explored this phenomenon in specific genres, authors, and local traditions. But reading these pieces as sensational artifacts designed to shock—as González de Amezúa fiercely advocated, thus casting a reductive shadow—neglects the delicate scaffolding of political, legal, and editorial strategies sustaining their *raison d'être*. It also neglects the possibility of connecting the development of the book with that of the social structures that fostered and nurtured it. If «the invention of printing coincided with the invention of childhood», as Susan Stewart has suggested (1993: 43), the rise of the Spanish Baroque novel coincided with a ‘reinvention’ of the family, of the printing families as much as the printed ones.

It is difficult to verify what Francisco Santos thought of the frontiers that the novel had crossed up until the suffering mothers and children of his *Día y noche*, but the weight of tradition—the anxiety of (the short story) influence—is easily perceived in its many glimpses of the past. In his decaying Madrid, the maid’s body is open for business much like the best-selling short-story collection of the century was open to all kinds of readers. If the words *para todos* were not mentioned, it is because there was no need to, because they still resided comfortably in the Baroque imagination forty years after their birth in edition after edition.³² Santos is indebted to Pérez de Montalbán as much as *Día y noche de Madrid* is to all the doors opened by *Para todos*. The joke on the maid, as a result, has an Oedipal flavor, since it speaks about the burdens of tradition and about the need to create some imaginative space—the need to kill the (admired) father—at a time when the novel had already reached its peak. But what it also highlights once again is that the genealogy of the unspeakable, to which incest belongs, is not that of the un-writable, let alone the un-publishable. There was a time and a place to reflect on incest, and for this reflection to happen it was not only the novelist who had to be extraordinarily tactful, but also the editor, the printer of the book, and even those who approved its sale. Taboos need to be told so they can continue being such. These narrative experiments were not so much stories of excess, but rather calculated reflections on the centrality of transgressive desire as a motor of novelistic fiction and as a means for exploring new forms of early modern subjectivities.

³¹ The words belong to Barnes (2002: 1).

³² This piece, as Cayuela reminds us (2005: 253), was one of the very few ones that did not suffer the 1625 ban by the Junta de Reformación. It was reprinted several times after its original release in 1632.

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