

Incest as Metaphorical Sites of Relations in Cándido María Trigueros' *El precipitado*

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Trigueros, Enlightenment, Incest, Kinship, Vertical and horizontal correspondences

Abstract:

This paper examines a sentimental play by Cándido María Trigueros, *El precipitado*, [1773] and posits that the incestuous relations between father-daughter and between siblings respectively function as metaphorical sites from where Trigueros straddles, perhaps unconsciously yet intuitively, the vertical and hierarchical correspondences of subordination of the [pre]Enlightenment and the horizontal connections of the Romantic period. By questioning, even momentarily, the order of relationship categories, Trigueros places himself and the reader at the intersection of competing epistemes regarding correspondences, relationships, and dependencies.

El incesto como lugar metafórico de relaciones en *El precipitado* de Cándido María Trigueros

Palabras clave:

Trigueros, Ilustración, Incesto, Lazos familiares, Correspondencias verticales y horizontales

Resumen:

Este trabajo examina el drama sentimental de Cándido María Trigueros, *El precipitado*, [1773] y postula que las relaciones incestuosas entre padre e hija y la relación entre hermano y hermana funcionan como lugares metafóricos desde donde Trigueros parece proponer una transición entre las correspondencias verticales y jerárquicas de subordinación propias del antiguo régimen y las conexiones horizontales del período romántico.

Introduction

Though the mere mention of ‘incest’ conjures repulsion and images of violence as well as a collective sense of proscription due in great part to what psychoanalysts, social scientists and anthropologists in general have labeled as a universal taboo, we find that familial ties and kinship systems do and have changed.¹ As a result of this, subsequent definitions of family and household, and the respective functions attributed to each member have contributed in part to broader or narrower interpretations and prohibitions throughout the centuries.

This paper examines a sentimental play by Cándido María Trigueros, *El precipitado*, [1773] and posits that the incestuous relations between father-daughter and between siblings respectively function as metaphorical sites from where Trigueros straddles, perhaps unconsciously yet intuitively, the vertical and hierarchical correspondences of subordination of the [pre]Enlightenment and the horizontal connections of the Romantic period.² By questioning, even

¹ In *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, 1922, Freud hypothesized that the incestuous taboo stems from the primitive form of human society, or a primal horde, ruled by a powerful male who satisfies his appetites, but forces the other males into abstinence, thus resulting in the need to kill the dominant/father figure in order to replace him [89-95]. In *Totem and Taboo*, 1918, he dealt with the prevention of totem incest. «If, for example, the man belongs to a clan with the totem of the Kangaroo and marries a woman of the Emu totem, the children, both boys and girls, are all Emu. According to the totem law incestuous relations with his mother and his sister, who are Emu like himself, are therefore made impossible for a son of this marriage» [8]. However, «the father, who is a Kangaroo, is free—at least under this prohibition—to commit incest with his daughters, who are Emu» [1918: 8]. See also Claude Lévi-Strauss, 1969, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* for an explication of the transition from nature to society and the need for exchange/exogamy. «The prohibition of incest is in origin neither purely cultural nor purely natural. [...] It is the fundamental step because of which, by which, but above all in which, the transition from nature to culture is accomplished. [...] Before it, culture is still non-existent; with it, nature's sovereignty over man is ended [...] it brings about and is in itself the advent of a new order» [24-25]. See also Robin Fox's seminal work *Kinship & Marriage*, 1967, for examples of varying degrees and models of familial groups. Today, a number of countries are considering decriminalizing incestuous relations between consenting adults.

² See Michel Foucault, 1973, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* and specifically the chapter devoted to classifying. In his first model, organization and internal dependencies are more important [144]. The horizontal relations are best explained in the following chapter devoted to the limits of representation by introducing ‘inflection’ into the study of languages. Consequently, «languages are no longer contrasted in accordance with what their words designate, but in accordance with the means whereby these words are linked together [...]



momentarily, the order of relationship categories, Trigueros places himself and the reader at the intersection of competing episteme regarding correspondences, relationships, and dependencies.

My aim is to first explore the genetic and social definitions and degrees of incest, and the variability of prohibitions before and during the eighteenth century. Second, I want to examine briefly the emergence of the sentimental novels and plays of the eighteenth century and its focus on the bonds of family community, resemblance, affinity, and sentiment; and finally, concentrate on *El precipitado*, which presents two cases of ‘almost incest’ as well as a love triangle, and study these shifting interrelations.

General notions and examples of religious and civil laws regarding incest

According to early Judeo-Christian texts, incest could include sexual relations among relatives sharing a direct line of consanguinity and among those with a kinship association or familial affinity not linked at any degree by blood.³ The book of Leviticus extends the prohibition to the «nakedness of thy sister, the daughter of thy father, or daughter of thy mother [...]» [18:9]. Equally off limits is a father's wife's daughter, a brother's wife, a daughter in law, a son's daughter, or a daughter's daughter [18:10-11], as well as a mother's [or father's] sister, and a brother's wife [20:11-21]. However Deuteronomy ‘recommends’ that, if brothers dwell together and one of them dies and leaves no child, her husband's

which determines not only each one's individuality, but also its resemblances to the others; it is this mechanism, the bearer of identity and difference, the sign of adjacency, the mark of kinship, that is now to become the basis of history» [236]. See also Benedict Anderson's explication regarding the seemingly paradoxical connection between a strong center/a vertical hierarchy and a porous/ indistinct border [*Imagined Community* 15].

³ *Black's Law Dictionary* 1996 edition defines incest as «sexual relations between family members or close relatives, including children related by adoption» *The Oxford Dictionary* however, adds that it is: «Sexual relations between people classed as being too closely related to marry each other»; and further labels it: «The crime of having sexual intercourse with a parent, child, sibling, or grandchild»



brother shall go in unto her, and the firstborn shall succeed in the name of the brother which is dead [25:5-6].⁴

Grounded on the command that all creatures be fruitful, multiply and replenish, it is not surprising that canon law has regulated with whom and for what reason one should and could engage in sexual activities.⁵ Consequently, and given that the sole purpose of sexual activity is procreation, among the most penalized sexual practices are those 'against nature' which exclude the possibility of reproduction: bestiality, sodomy, and masturbation. Not surprisingly then, sexual sins 'according to nature' that might result in reproduction [incest, adultery, and fornication] are found to be less punishable.⁶

Civil laws regarding degrees of consanguinity and kinship⁷ have been equally explicit, as seen in, for example, the Spanish thirteenth century major law code *Las siete partidas*. *Partida VII* contains explicit references to what incest is and within what degree of relationship it happens. Law VII. i specifically extends the ban to the fourth degree, to a female related by affinity, and to the wife of a

⁴ These seemingly opposing laws regarding 'brethren' were the basis of the arguments marshaled by Henry VIII and Catherine of Aragon in seeking the marriage annulment sought by the former and opposed by the latter. See J. J. Scarisbrick's seminal work *Henry VIII*, 1979, for a detailed account of the arguments in favor/against the dissolution of the marriage. See also the *The Book of Common Prayer, and Administration of the Sacraments... of the Church of England*, 1716, for a detailed listing of kindred and affinity «wherein whoever are related, are forbidden in Scripture, and our Laws, to marry together» [390].

⁵ See St. Augustine's letters regarding matrimony, children, sexual intercourse «On the Good of Marriage», and «On Marriage and Concupiscence». See also *The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas*.

⁶ See Bartolomé Clavero, 1990, «Delito y pecado. Noción y escala de transgresiones» [57-89]; Enrique Villalba Pérez, 2004, *¿Pecadoras o delincuentes? Delito y género en la corte (1580-1630)*. Díez Fernández, 2001, «Imágenes de la sodomía en los poemas de los siglos de oro», lists, «...pecados contra natura [...] como la masturbación, la bestialidad, el lesbianismo, la sodomía e incluso [algunas] prácticas heterosexuales no permitidas» [2001:125]. Female adultery was particularly problematic because it touched both the private (sin) and public (crime) spheres since it affected rights and laws of inheritance and succession. Though the sin was confessed in private, the consequences of the action were public [Clavero: 63].

⁷ James Twitchell's *Forbidden Partners*, 1987, distinguishes between the semiotics of incest which is based on a social code and the biology of inbreeding which is a genetic code [9]. Robin Fox, 1967, posits that 'consanguinity' is a socially defined quality and that what matters is what people *do* with their definitions, i.e. the social use to which they are put [35].



relation within the same degree.⁸ Similarly, book XII, Title XXIX of the *Novisimia recopilación* is devoted entirely to the topic of *incesto y estupro*.⁹ Promulgated in the fourteenth century, it too maintains the same degree of consanguinity as in *Las partidas* but extends the ban to *comadres, las barraganas*,¹⁰ *las parientas, o las sirvientas de casa* because these involvements with family members often led to rivalries and enmities within the family. The harm therefore stems from the possible discord that arises within the extended family. The gravity was not in the act itself but in the ensuing retaliation and its messy consequences. The punishment for breaches included public humiliation and/or public whippings, banishment and a hefty monetary punishment: «... allende de las otras penas en Derecho establecidas, pierda la mitad de sus bienes para la nuestra camara.» However, the law clearly stated that the crime must be committed ‘knowingly’ so before determining guilt it was imperative to demonstrate that both parties assented and deliberately took part in the forbidden relationship. We see then how the subjective element, i.e., the intent and the will to break the law, is already present.¹¹ Consequently, an absence of knowledge *a priori* eliminated the classification of crime *a posteriori*.

Based on the above, we know what incest is and with whom it is. If we focus the attention now on its prohibition, it is interesting to find that despite our ideas of a universal taboo, a number of texts defy or question the very notion.¹²

⁸ All quotes are from the 2001 reissue of the 1931 translation commissioned by the American Bar Association of *Las siete partidas*.

⁹ The definitions and legal terminologies regarding sexual associations were quite precise. «Pecar con soltera es simple fornicación: con casada adulterio, con doncella virgen estupro, con parienta incesto, con persona Religiosa y dedicada a Dios sacrilegio o adulterio espiritual». [Tomo III, *Diccionario de Autoridades* 1732].

¹⁰ Se llamaba assi la amiga, dama, ò concubína que se conservaba en la casa del que estaba amancebado con ella: y para serlo era preciso fuesse libre, y no sierva, soltéra, única, y que no tuviesse parentesco en grado conocido con el galán que le embarazasse casar con ella si quisiesse. (Tomo I, *Diccionario de Autoridades*, 1726).

¹¹ See Aniceto Masferrer's, 2009, study on the Spanish codification of crime: «The importance of the subjective element had already been identified in the Aristotelian, Augustinian, and Thomist doctrines, becoming the core of crime» [116].

¹² Recent studies questioning the notion of a universal taboo include: Ellen Pollack's, 2003, *Incest*



A remarkable example of a certain 'relativity' not only *vis-à-vis* other transgressions, but *vis-à-vis* the direction of consanguinity can be found in *Principios del orden esencial de la naturaleza, establecidos por fundamento de la moral y política, y por prueba de la religión* [Antonio Xavier Pérez y López, 1785]. Though his views are aligned with Catholic scholasticism, they reveal knowledge of the debates of his time as well as an intuitive understanding of what twentieth century anthropologists label intergenerational incest between mature and maturing organisms [Fox, 71]. His opinions on family, kinship and especially on incestuous relations are of particular relevance to this paper because of his candor, his lack of repulsion, and the correlations/analogies he establishes while arguing against incest.¹³

and the English Novel, 1684-1814, which studies the role of fictional representations of incest as both transgressive and liberatory and as part of the history of the formation of a discursive construct. Suzanne R. Pucci, 1997, in «The Nature of Domestic Intimacy and Sibling Incest in Diderot's *Fils Naturel*» maintains that viewing incest as a sacrosanct interdiction obscures the other functions it performs such as an 'inside' to family intimacy and the multiple paradoxes of exclusion that are always coupled with it [271]. Seth J. Denbo's 2001 doctoral dissertation, *Speaking Relatively: A History of Incest and the family in Eighteenth-Century England*, sees incest and its representations as well as the preoccupation over it as a barometer through which to measure the foundations of English individualism. In «La mirada incestuosa: escenas de la vida privada en el *Roman* de la *Manekine*, de Philippe de Remi» Ana Basarte, 2009, studies the medieval variations on the legend and story of the consummated incest between king Antiochus and his daughter as per *Historia de Apolloni Regis Tyri*, and the *roman* of the self-mutilated maiden, *La Manekine* of 1240. Basarte sees the topic of incest in these narratives and in the numerous adaptations, on the one hand, as a result of the hereditary and lineage concerns of the nobility, and, on the other hand, as a means of control and decision making in the hands of the Church once marriage becomes one of the seven sacraments in the XII century [2009:167-179]. See also Elizabeth Archibald's, 1991, *Appoloniuis of Tyre: Medieval and Renaissance Themes and Variations* for a study on the variations on the themes of incest, violence, etc., throughout Europe. In Spanish Medieval literature we find Exemplo 36 of the *Libro del Conde Lucanor* [1340], where a mother sleeps with her adult son, calls him *marido e hijo* until the father returns years later to discover she has been waiting for him. The different variations on the romance of *Don Bueso y su Hermana* also tells the story of an 'almost' incest between two lost siblings separated during the Spanish-Moorish frontiers wars.

¹³ Incest is but one of a number of crimes which have been labeled *atroces* throughout the Spanish legal system. See «La represión de los delitos atroces en el Derecho Castellano de la Edad Moderna» in *Revista de estudios histórico-jurídicos*, 26 [2004: 255-299]. By labeling the crimes *atroces* as opposed to 'grave' or 'leve' the system could expedite the case without the added burden of following whatever due process was expected and apply a more severe punishment. However, the classification of *atroz* was not always determined by the intrinsic nature of the crime but by the circumstantial desire to 'make a point'. «La imprecisión acerca del término fue



In arguing against a sound conjugal relationship between parents and children, Pérez presents two separate but complimentary reasons based solely on roles, functions and dynamics between parents and children, and between wives and husbands. Regarding the first, he argues that by virtue of their hierarchical role in the family unit, parents inspire and expect respect, subordination and obedience from their children. Marriage, on the other hand, is a contract between two equals and demands frankness of each partner. Consequently, the parent-offspring relationship [or intergenerational incest] is incompatible with a conjugal relationship because of each person's natural and inherent function within the family unit. «La malicia del incesto entre las personas que se hallan en línea recta de consanguinidad es evidente atendiendo que los oficios y obligaciones de los padres para con sus hijos son de imperio respetable, que inspire recato y subordinación y la de estos para aquellos es de respeto y obediencia; las cuales funciones son opuestas a la llaneza y confianza casi igual, que exige el matrimonio...» [Pérez y López, 95].¹⁴

Pérez posits, however, that the incompatibility arising from hierarchical notions of roles and obligations is not present in marriages between siblings because their functions are fairly equal within the family unit. «A mi parecer no se encuentra esta incompatibilidad de obligaciones y oficios en los matrimonios de hermanos, que son muy iguales» [95]. Moreover, he argues, history offers a number of precedents of such marriages when siblings married in compliance with God's order to be fruitful and multiply: «...y al principio del mundo, en que estaba todo en su vigor primitivo, se casaron los hermanos» [95]. In sum, it seems

una maniobra política y jurídica conscientemente utilizada para favorecer una mayor eficacia represiva del sistema penal» [2/16]. See also Michel Foucault, 1995, *Discipline and Punish*: «Although redress of the private injury occasioned by the offence must be proportionate, although the sentence must be equitable, the punishment is carried out in such a way as to give a spectacle not of measure, but of imbalance and excess... there must be an emphatic affirmation of power and its intrinsic superiority» [49].

¹⁴ This argument prevailed into the twentieth century given that Robin Fox addresses it and argues against it because it confuses role with biology, or as he adds, a person can only be one person at a time [1967: 57-58].



that the opposition to incestuous marriages is dependent on and relative to interpretations of roles, dynamics, practical needs¹⁵ and directional connections, rather than stemming from inherent and immutable notions of immorality or from a universal taboo. «[D]e consiguiente la prohibición de estos enlaces proviene solo del derecho positivo por justas razones que hay para ella» [95].¹⁶ This is further evidenced in the numerous instances found in history, where an act denied and forbidden to men is permitted to the gods, the kings and the powerful, thus drawing attention to the directional relativity of the horror of incest.¹⁷ Equally crucial is that the opinion regarding a comprehensive, divine and universal law has by then been debated, changed and adapted.¹⁸ In addition to this, we find a

¹⁵ In book III: *of Words*, and specifically Chapter v devoted to *Of the Names of Mixed Modes and Relations*, John Locke states that «law-makers have often made laws about species of actions, which were only the creatures of their own understandings,» and posits whether in order to know if man's «idea of *adultery*, or *incest*, be right, will [he] seek it anywhere amongst things existing? Or is it true, because anyone has been witness to such an action?» The answer is unambiguous: «No: but it suffices here, that men have put together such a collection into one complex idea, that makes the archetype, and specific idea, whether ever any such action were committed *in rerum natura*, or not.» He further concludes that, «the mind in mixed modes arbitrarily unites into complex ideas, such as it finds convenient; [...] it searches not its pattern in nature, [...] but puts such together, as may serve its own purposes» [384-386].

¹⁶ Biblical and classical narratives of incestuous relations tend to be based on impulsive and 'immoral' behaviors offensive to the Judeo-Christian God or the Hellenic/Roman gods. Clear examples of 'sins of the flesh' are the stories of Lot and his daughters [Genesis 19:30]; Tamar and her half-brother Amnon [II Samuel 13:2]; and Reuben and Bilhah, his father's concubine [Genesis 35:22]. Classical and Roman narratives [fictional and non-fictional] are also filled with incestuous relations: Kronos and his half-sister and consort Rhea; Zeus and numerous family members as well as semi-gods and plain mortals; Oedipus and Jocasta, etc. Kings and royal families also engaged in endogamous relations for the sake of consolidating political power and possessions: Caligula and his sisters; Claudius and his niece; Felipe II of Spain and his cousin Mary I of England, among others. See also Twitchell's chapter «The Horror of Incest», in which he refers to numerous folk tales, fables, letters, and ballads that deal with «the maintenance of sexual order within the family» [61].

¹⁷ Burke and others make the connection between horror and enjoyment: *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* [1757], Kant's *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime* [1764], and Jovellanos' *Memoria del Castillo de Belver* [1805]. These seemingly contradictory or opposing experiences are at the center of our analysis of incest as a metaphor where vertical and horizontal relations are straddled and negotiated.

¹⁸ Despite the codification of a number of crimes and punishments, many (especially those of a private nature) were no longer strictly applied by the latter part of the eighteenth century, much less considered to be *atrocies*. As Tomás y Valiente affirms, «desde que la perspectiva para definir o tipificar delitos y para perseguirlos comienza a ser el daño social directo y no la ofensa (pecado)..., el Derecho se humaniza, y al perder carga teológica, pierde también rigidez



distinction between sin and crime as part of a larger secularization of the confessional state already in writings of the latter part of the seventeenth century and most definitely throughout the eighteenth, as in, for example, Christian Thomasius' *Institutiones Iurisprudentiae Divinae*¹⁹ [1688] and Cesare Beccaria's *Dei delitti e delle pene* [1764].

The sentimental plays of the eighteenth century were replete with stories of sibling incest or near 'mistakes', though we find much fewer examples in Spain than in England and France.²⁰ It is interesting that at the intersection of [pre]Enlightenment universal notions of hierarchy, order, knowledge, sin and [pre]Romantic discourse of fraternity, love, intuition, and crime, many of these relations between siblings function as sites of convergence, not divergence. In the case of *El precipitado*, it is perhaps more intriguing because we are faced with two sets of 'incestuous relations': an intergenerational one and one between members of a same generation.

Background of the first Spanish sentimental plays and *El precipitado* [1773]

The impetus to write the first Spanish sentimental plays came from the gatherings held by and at the home of Peruvian-born Pablo de Olavide, who played a major role in the Spanish Enlightenment. Frequent attendees at his home in Seville included members of the *Academia de Buenas Letras* and, of course, Gaspar de Jovellanos and Cándido María Trigueros. The introduction to *El*

dogmática y severidad condenatoria» [1990:55].

¹⁹ See also Ian Hunter's *The Secularisation of the Confessional State: The Political Thought of Christian Thomasius* (2007), as well as *Christian Thomasius, Essays on State, Church and Politics*.

²⁰ Marriage is a hot theme in these sentimental plays and domestic dramas. García Garrosa identifies a number of sub-topics associated to marriage in the Spanish plays: social inequality, arranged marriages and paternal imposition, laws and opinions regarding marriage, and adultery. In most cases the concern is the social order and stability. The regard for and the concern over social and class equality seems to be the driving force behind these plays, and only one of the plays studied deals with incest.



*delincuente honrado*²¹ stated that it and *El precipitado* were written as a result of a 'literary dispute' at the beginning of 1773. Ceán Bermúdez describes it as follows: «fue en Sevilla en la tertulia de Olavide, donde se ventiló cuanto había que decir acerca de las comedia en prosa a la Armoyante [sic], o tragi comedia; y aunque se convino en ser monstruosa, [...] se propuso que el que quisiese componer por modo de diversión y entretenimiento alguna en este género, la podía entregar. [...] *El delincuente* mereció la aprobación general de la junta, con el pleno conocimiento de pertenecer a un género espurio» [312-313].²²

These *comedias lacrimosas* thrived in Spain. The setting was normally within the domestic sphere, although the problems stemmed from external social, economic or political injustices.²³ From a theoretical perspective and judging on the nomenclature used, the subgenre broadcasted its 'contradiction' by claiming to be a comedy which would, as per the Aristotelian precepts, appeal to reason while flaunting its sentimental component, thus aiming at the heart as well. But, the sentimental plays also blurred the lines between two distinct genres: drama and novel.²⁴

Trigueros's background and works place him squarely within the field of influence and sympathies of the Spanish Enlightenment.²⁵ Born in 1736 in the town of Orgaz, Toledo, he studied Latin and Philosophy at the Colegio de Santo Tomás in Madrid. In 1752, he accompanied the bishop of Córdoba, Don

²¹ See *Biblioteca de Autores Españoles* [BAE] 46 for a printed edition of *El delincuente honrado*. Besides those two, at least two others were submitted: *Los derechos de un padre* by don Ignacio Luis de Aguirre, and *Los ilustres salteadores*, also penned by Trigueros.

²² See his *Memorias para la vida del Excmo. Señor D. Gaspar Melchor y Jove Llanos...* [1814]; also Francisco Aguilar Piñal, 1987, *Un Hombre Ilustrado. Cándido María Trigueros*.

²³ See Joan Lynne Pataky Kosove, 1977, *The Comedia Lacrimosa and Spanish Romantic Drama (1773-1865)*; María Jesús García Garrosa, 1990, *La retórica de las lágrimas, la comedia sentimental española, 1751-1802*; Yvonne Fuentes, 1999, *El triángulo sentimental en el drama del dieciocho (Inglaterra, Francia, España)*.

²⁴ Sentimental plays incorporated such extraordinary plots, twists and catastrophes filled with tension, fear, and surprise that characters wondered if they were not reading a novel. «Yo he quedado pasmado y fuera de mí con el gozo. Me parece un sueño cuanto pasa: creo estar oyendo una novela...» [*El precipitado*, Acto V, última escena].

²⁵ See Russel P. Sebold, 1973, «El incesto, el suicidio y el primer romanticismo español.»



Francisco de Solís, to that city, and joined him in Seville as Archbishop of Seville. In 1781, Trigueros is back in Madrid as librarian of the Reales Estudios de San Isidro. He wrote extensively about philology, history, botany, and of course literature, translating and recasting plays by Horace, Sophocles, Virgil and Homer, among others, and was at times maligned for it.²⁶

The title²⁷

Though the modern edition refers to the play as *El precipitado*, the 1774 manuscript bears the title of, *Cándida o la hija sobrina*, thus framing the relationship around her and an older figure. Although the part following the ‘o’ in the double title should serve as an explication of the first, the ‘daughter niece’ reference does not clarify, illuminate or reveal anything [Moretti, 2013:194]. The binomial nomenclature does not clarify; instead, it creates confusion, leaving the reader wondering whose daughter and whose niece she is. More disturbing is the nagging question of whether she is both daughter and niece to one person. Regardless of which questions are asked, the title always refers back to familial relationships, to domestic settings, and to concerns over correspondences.

Moreover, if, as Moretti posits, adjectives in a title transform the semantic field by destabilizing familiar figures, in this case the adjective [whether daughter or niece] not only «relocates the narrative from substance to accident», it highlights the uncertainty and most definitely destabilizes not only domesticity but social and cultural taboos and mores [2013: 197]. The possible interpretations triggered by the title also highlight the permeability between what was quintessentially normal and what was transgressive [Maza, 1997: 211]. On the

²⁶ See *Ensayo de una biblioteca española de los mejores escritores del reinado de Carlos III*, by Juan Sempere y Guarinos, for an extensive listing of Trigueros’ translations and writings. Regarding the attacks against him, Sempere affirms the following: « se intentó desacreditarlo, y aun hacerlo pasar por herege» [1789: 85].

²⁷ All citations are from the 1988 modern edition of *El Precipitado*, edited by Piedad Bolaños Donoso.



other hand, the 1785 authorized printed edition refers to the play as *El precipitado*, thus focusing on the male character's rashness rather than on familial ties. In this title there is no reference or inference to domestic life, transgression or uncertainty.

The plot

Two brothers, Justo [a successful man of commerce] and Prudencio [a Marqués] and their families plan to relocate from Cartagena to Seville. While Prudencio and his young son Amato go ahead to make the necessary arrangements, travelling together are Justo and his pregnant wife Marcela, along with Prudencio's pregnant wife, Gracia. They are captured by Berbers and taken to Tetuán, where both women give birth to girls. On their way from Tetuán to Cairo, Gracia watches as her husband Justo, her sister Marcela and the two newborn girls disappear in the midst of a horrible storm. Gracia survives, is rescued by a Dutch vessel, and returns to Spain, where her brother-in-law and his son, Prudencio and Amato respectively, live. Justo too survives, becomes rich, but does not return to Seville until today. This leaves Marcela and the two girls lost at sea. Additionally, living in Seville with the family is a 15 year old orphan, Cándida, rescued by Justo and sent to Seville two years ago. As expected, the foster-siblings, Cándida and Amato, fall in love, but we discover soon that Prudencio has also fallen in love with his ward.

By the third act, all obstacles are seemingly overcome as the benevolent Prudencio becomes aware of the love between Cándida and Amato and resolves to love her as a father instead. The act ends as the young lovers wait impatiently for the priest, the witnesses, and a notary to perform the secret ceremony.²⁸ However, things soon become unraveled. Though Prudencio believes the spectre

²⁸ The letter that Justo sends the family revealing his plans of arriving with a surprise for his brother and a cousin/bride for his nephew includes the important detail that he has the necessary dispensation for the cousins to marry [II, i].



of his dead wife Marcela is torturing him for wanting to marry Cándida,²⁹ she is in fact alive and arrives with Justo, who, we learn, freed her recently from the house of a Turkish lord where she had been kept captive for the last thirteen years. When Marcela sees Cándida, she recognizes her and, while mother and daughter embrace, Prudencio is horrified to think he almost wed his daughter: «mi amada hija, mi hija cuyo esposo quise ser... me horrorizo al recordarlo» [IV, v]. All ends well when Justo explains that Cándida is his and Gracia's child not his brother's. As a result of this revelation, and given that the definitions of kinship and correspondence have changed, there are no legal impediments for the two young lovers /cousins/once-upon-a-time-blood siblings and, before that, temporary foster-siblings to marry.³⁰

Names and interactions

The characters' names are typical Spanish names but are also symbolic.³¹ The brother's names refer to virtues recognized in the Classical Antiquity and in the Christian tradition. Though 'prudence' may be more of a function of the intellect and reason, 'justice' clearly implies social interchanges and relations to others. Justo is fair and equitable, although his cryptic messages and pranks will

²⁹ In an earlier scene he comments about the resemblance between Cándida and Marcela, his late wife: «Páreceme que veo en ella a mi difunta esposa... Después de trece años de viudedad, estaba mi corazón desusado en amar... Esta modesta belleza, esta belleza irresistible volvió a ponerle en movimiento...» [II, iv]. It is the resemblance between the ward and the absent wife which stirs the feelings of love in his heart. Although she will prove to be his niece and not his daughter, the time she spent with Marcela as a captive may have contributed to the resemblance in attitudes and behaviors more than to any physical resemblance given that she and Marcela have no blood link. Therefore, the idea of resemblance based on affinity and community (horizontal connections) rather than on strict genetic or hierarchical markers (vertical connections) can be seen in this exchange.

³⁰ According to the terminology employed, the children of siblings of the same-sex are classified as parallel cousins while those of siblings of different sex are cross-cousins. In some cultures the term of reference for father and father's brother is the same and the term of reference for mother and mother's sister is the same. Consequently, parallel cousins are considered siblings and, therefore, not marriageable while cross-cousins may be marriageable [Fox, 1967: 185].

³¹ As in most sentimental plays, the mothers are secondary characters and exhibit the expected traits of fortitude, grace, kindness and beauty.



cause undue anxiety and have unforeseen consequences. He is the man who returns with a new found fortune based on commerce. The commentary on his wealth and its less than noble origin based on trade is revealing and aptly relevant since it alludes to the contemporary preeminence of usefulness [good for aiding the needy] over lineage. «Si los años andan por acá malos, no te dé pena: yo tengo las arcas llenas de doblones; ellos no serán muy nobles porque son de comercio, pero son muy cabales y muy finos, y estupendos para hacer obras de caridad» [IV, viii]. It is also he who comments on the current social customs and economic changes: «Como soy medio turco, hermano, fumo que me las pelo... ¿Hay en Sevilla muchos pobres? ... Señal de que hay muchos ricos » [IV, viii]. His function is that of social commentator and witness of the new economic success provided by trade and commerce. His role is to create the initial confusion and then provide the *deus ex machina* resolution by resolving the illegality of incest within a system that bans marriage between siblings, but which also exhibits fluidity in terms, definitions and relations.

Prudencio, is reasonable, wise and measured in speech and actions. When he speaks with Cándida about his feelings, he begs her to speak freely about her religious inclinations. « Dime, Cándida, ¿Te llama Dios al estado religioso? ¿Quieres por tu voluntad ser religiosa? [...] Yo he pensado casarte... con persona que te ama» [I, iii]. He is faced with the dilemma of either being the cause of her sorrow if she marries him out of a sense of obligation, or of contributing to his own unhappiness if she declines his proposal. Yet, when he discovers the passion that his son has for Cándida, reason and obligation prevail, though not before articulating the options in terms of 'rivalry', 'ceding', and 'example': «¿He de entregarla yo propio a un rival? Este rival es un pedazo de mi corazón; [...] Yo le debo dar el ejemplo, yo se lo debo dar... Cedamos, pues, ¡ah!, cedamos la felicidad» [II, vi]. Although the rivalry between father and son is not a new one and may hint at a threat to patriarchy and the establishment, at this stage, the threat is inadvertent and involuntary, given that the son unknowingly desires



what the father wants. The prudent patriarch chooses to remove himself from the romantic equation, allowing the younger and more vibrant generation a chance at happiness, as if signaling a willing shift in realignment from a patriarchal model of order to an egalitarian model of relationships.

When he realizes he almost wed his daughter, he is filled with pain and horror: «mi hija cuyo esposo quise ser...me horrorizo al recordarlo» [IV,v]. We see then that the earlier strict definition of ‘household’ and ‘family’ has been transformed and the transgression mitigated by a less restrictive temporal domain. While Cándida is only his ward, there is no legal or moral impediment for his marriage to her; while she is his son’s love interest, there is only a moral discomfort and it is resolved by the father choosing to forsake his happiness for that of his son’s and adopting a different role. On the other hand, when faced with the thought of marrying his blood daughter, he is horrified, for even in the temporal domain, such a relationship is viewed as contrary to sound policy, based on uses and customs designed to serve a society’s own purposes. Furthermore, what attracts him to her is not sexual desire, or lust, or even the recognition of blood so common in plays of honor, but rather the affinity, the commonality, the resemblance between her and the woman who raised her for the first 13 years. It is that similarity in demeanor with his lost wife which draws him to her.

As in most sentimental plays, the adolescent female character is of mysterious parentage, virginal and sensitive. She is the inspiration for both men; she is the ‘unknown’ and puts in motion that «paradox of exclusion that [is] always coupled with, always doubled by, tropes of resemblance, which lead [...] to very near ‘mistakes’ of incest» [Pucci, 1997:273].

The third character in this unintended love triangle is Amato, handsome and generous and equally passionate, impatient, and intense: «Entra con desasosiego y se pasa sin ver a su padre. Nueva detención a mis amantes prisas! [...] Cándida, todo mi corazón...sin quien yo no puedo vivir un instante más. [...] ella me ama y yo la amo. Yo la adoro» [I, v-vi]. And when pushed, he threatens



all who attempt to separate them: «... yo me la llevaré si me la niegan [...] quemaría yo antes el convento» [II, i].³²

In him, social conventions give way to amorous passion and this passion resorts to and is fueled by Romantic rhetoric. And so we hear Cándida's declarations of resignation and sacrifice countered by Amato's determination to escape to a more compassionate place: «busquemos la piedad en el fin del Universo... Cándida y Amato en un desierto harán la sociedad más afortunada» [III, iii]. Despite this rhetoric the lover's plight at this point is whether to elope or to marry a yet unknown cousin. By the end of the next scene they have the paternal consent and this easily obtained approval from a prudent father underscores the overreaction [tantrum] of an impulsive adolescent lover.

When confronted with Marcela's arrival and the revelation that Cándida is her daughter [therefore Prudencio's child and Amato's sister], the characters' reaction to the discovery highlights not only the degree and type of moral and legal transgression but, most importantly, the degree of horror, regret and repentance. The father's concern is that they not jeopardize their honor and provoke scorn. Cándida, however, laments the contradiction of being innocent by virtue of intent, yet guilty by the effect and appearance of a horrendous crime; her shame and guilt are engendered by an act, regardless of intention. And yet, despite the impending doom, her knowledge does not cancel her emotion: «¡...no me arrancan este amor que tengo clavado en lo íntimo de mi corazón...!» [IV, v].

On the other hand, Amato's introspection reveals an intense array of emotions, ranging from despair, determination and doubt to a final sense of serenity, but never guilt. The imagery of darkness, swords, shadows, and fire, as

³² Professor Sebold saw Amato as a Romantic character who expresses «su pesar en los términos cósmicos que el héroe romántico acostumbra usar; pues encontrándose por su amor en violación de las costumbres de la sociedad, se imagina como rechazado por toda la humanidad» [1973: 676-677].



well as the cries for nothingness are expected from a perturbed Romantic character. That he should seek death, suffer fits of passion, hallucinate and claim to hear clarions and see horrific specters are all part of the Romantic discourse.

What surprises the reader is his lucid reasoning that the impediment is circumstantial, not moral: «¡Oh durísimas leyes! Las leyes me roban el único bien que apetecía...» [IV, v]. Because these laws are no longer absolute and universal but laws of today and of here, it is the place and time of their births, not in relation to each other but in relation to the divide between the laws of different nations, that determines the transgression, the taboo, and the illegality. «¿Por qué no nací yo en los felices países del Oriente, donde no es delito amar a sus hermanas los tiernos hermanos? ...mi delito y mi desventura están en no olvidarla... pongamos fin a mi delito» [V, i]. Equally interesting is that he mentions 'sin' only when he ponders and correlates suicide with the destruction of God's creation. Despite this, the character asserts his existential autonomy, «si hoy impiden mi muerte, me mataré mañana, me mataré de aquí a un año, me mataré cuando se descuiden!» [V, ii].

The relativism in the claim that love between siblings is not illegal everywhere opens the door to other contingencies, and so once the morally and legally charged transgression loses its absolute dependency on relations it ceases to exist as an absolute crime. The character bemoans the circumstantial nature of the transgression, therefore contesting the very nature of law and power within the state. Yet he does not propose to take down the established order, nor fight it; he proposes instead to live outside an order that he views as unreasonable, cruel and, most importantly, arbitrary. In the end, there is no incest in the strict sense of the word.

These plots of 'almost mistakes' and of seemingly insurmountable obstacles did in fact reduce old and young to tears. What makes this play stand out is not that in both instances the parties are without knowledge, hence without fault; nor is it the absence of a patriarch exerting tyrannical will over the



household. What is surprising is that there are two sets of possible incestuous relations, and a love triangle formed by a dominant male, a maturing male and an adolescent female, and crisscrossing relations between the three. Moreover, each set of possible incestuous relations presents a different generational and kinship connection: the one between father/guardian-daughter/ward, which represents a vertical relationship of descent; and one between siblings, which corresponds to a horizontal or lateral relationship. Further complicating matters is the directional relationship between both males.

The manner in which Trigueros resolves the conflicts displays a perceptive negotiation between the traditional correspondences of subordination and the modern egalitarian relations of association. In the end, the conflicts created by the real and supposed relations served as metaphorical sites from where Trigueros explored these changing correspondences, obsolete models of hierarchy, and evolving relationships. The ties that bound these characters and that guided their behavior were not based on narrow correspondences of centripetal order, hierarchy, and authority, but on broad yet deep affective relations and connections. And this shift from bonds of kinship to bonds of association paralleled the epistemic changes in discourse of the [pre]Enlightenment and the Romantic periods.



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