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(Re)negotiating Freedom of Expression in the Spanish Transition: The Case of *El Pápus* (1973–1987)*

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Humour and the Law: The Ultimate Power Struggle

The 1970s marked a golden decade for satirical publications in Spain. As had been the case during its last heyday in the early 1900s, satirical imagery was used to construct a new political culture, whilst lambasting the country's weak democracy.¹ The resurgent vibrancy of the contemporary graphic humour scene was underscored by its bold deployment of satire, parody and irony meticulously to dissect the ideals at the heart of Francoist doctrine. Indeed, such cultural interventions can be understood more broadly in terms of what Germán Labrador Méndez has described as 'actos [que] son formas de vida democráticas, inéditas, alegales o ilegales, frecuentemente inmorales a la altura de 1975, cuyo ejercicio suponía una acción activa, un compromiso, una decisión'.² For its part, the Francoist regime—already in its final throes—to a certain extent tolerated this class of satirical journalism in its drive

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1 See *El humor y la cultura política en la España contemporánea*, ed. Josep L. Gómez Mompert, Francesc A. Martínez Gallego & Enrique Bordería Ortiz (Barcelona: Editorial Hacer, 2017). See also *El humor frente al poder: prensa humorística, cultura política y poderes fácticos en España (1927–1987)*, ed. Enrique Bordería Ortiz, Francesc A. Martínez & Josep L. Gómez Mompert (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2015).

2 Germán Labrador Méndez, 'El cristal de la bola', *Mombassa. Revista de Arte y Humanidades*, 8 (2010), 5–10 (p. 7).

to convince the international community of a supposed plurality of public opinion in Spain.³

Throughout the 1970s, the burgeoning market of Spanish visual print media destabilized the erstwhile monopoly enjoyed by the satirical publication *La Codorniz* (1941–1978). Across its thirty-seven years, and in the midst of dictatorship, this kiosk stalwart had prudently delivered humour in the *costumbrista* style, whilst, in the words of its resident cartoonist Antonio Mingote, offering critique via ‘ejercicios de elipsis, sobreentendidos y ambigüedades’.⁴ The most significant challengers to *La Codorniz*’s discursive hegemony were: the progressive, liberal *Hermano Lobo* (1972–1976); the sport-focused *Barrabás* (1972–1977); the anarchist-popular *El Papus* (1973–1987); and the communist, libertarian *Por Favor* (1974–1978). Within this context, *El Papus* stands out as the longest-running publication of the period, and is particularly worthy of attention given its persistent confrontations with the administration and the law, which included two four-month suspensions, numerous fiscal complaints, several full seizures and even two court-martials. The magazine developed a visual-verbal language of its own; an anarchic, audacious, corrosive and scatological sense of humour, which it used to dislocate the political language of the state. Throughout its print run it retained a strong commitment to graphic humour as a mode of expressing this popular sarcasm, with around seventy percent of its roughly thirty pages typically dedicated to visual content. Indeed, the toughest sanctions were meted out to the publication’s graphic material as its artists—through suggestive caricature, cartoons, comic strips and photocollage—harnessed the dissensual power of visual print media to ‘show’ that which could not be said.

The publication of the magazine coincided with—and arguably helped shape—shifting socio-cultural attitudes,⁵ which sought to question, among other things, the meaning of gender under the Francoist regime. Thus, a core feature of this investigation is its consideration of the extent to which the hegemonic structures of gender and identity, as well as those of

3 Enrique Bordería Ortiz, *La prensa durante el franquismo: represión, censura y negocio. Valencia (1939–1975)* (Valencia: Fundación Univ. de San Pablo C.E.U., 2000); Ricardo Manuel Martín de la Guardia, *Cuestión de tijeras: la censura en la transición a la democracia* (Madrid: Editorial Síntesis, 2008).

4 Quoted in Iván Tubau, *El humor gráfico en la prensa del franquismo* (Barcelona: Mitre, 1987), 229. Its style evolved according to the proclivities of its editors: from the light-hearted, yet intellectual humour of Miguel Mihura (1941–1944), to the more combative style of Álvaro de la Iglesia (1944–1978), for whom ‘sin un mínimo de discrepancia no hay periodismo’ (quoted in José Antonio Llera, *El humor verbal y visual de La Codorniz* [Madrid: CSIC/Instituto de la Lengua Española, 2003], 125).

5 Rhiannon McGlade, *Catalan Cartoons: A Cultural and Political History* (Cardiff: Univ. of Wales Press, 2016).

established familial roles, figure in the pieces that came under official scrutiny. Indeed, urban migration; access to secondary and higher education; the arrival of tourism; and contact with Western youth culture as well as growing secularization, produced a shift in patterns of behaviour, giving way to representations of a new Spanish woman—liberated and autonomous.⁶ At the core of this study then, is an exploration of the way in which these publications portrayed popular attitudes, ways of dressing and daily life in order to uncover the lived experience that influenced the reality portrayed by their cartoonists and writers.⁷

The archival material—brought together here for the first time—acts as a vital resource for a critical examination of unequal power structures and the ways in which ordinary citizens, despite the context of repression, were able to find means via which they might express themselves.⁸ My engagement with the ‘cultural archive’ of the 1970s interrogates fossilized notions of gender, female sexuality and Francoist family values in dissensual visual expression from the Transition.⁹ It also complicates notions of what is and is not ‘archivable’—in a Derridean sense—by querying misogynist attitudes and extracting material that positions female bodies at the fore.¹⁰ In line with recent criticism of the period, the essay not only ‘reconsider[s] the overlooked significance of gender and sexuality’ within this particular archive,¹¹ it implicitly challenges the privileging of male-centred narratives whilst demonstrating how the archive acts as a barometer for measuring the true extent of freedom of expression in Spain’s (re)nascent democratic order. It is worth noting that since 1966 all executive and judicial powers relating to the press were established by the so-called Fraga Law, which prohibited the administration from demanding prior consultation and exercising censorship. However, this legislative framework failed to provide

6 Mercedes Arbaiza Vilallonga, ‘Obreras, amas de casa y mujeres liberadas: trabajo, género e identidad obrera en España’, in *Feminidades y masculinidades: arquetipos y prácticas de género*, ed. Mary Nash (Madrid: Alianza, 2014), 129–58. These female characters would act as precursors to the iconic ‘housewives who wanted more’, later immortalized in the early films of Pedro Almodóvar such as *Pepi, Luci, Bom y otras chicas del montón* (1980) and *¿Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto?!* (1984).

7 Elena Hernández Sandoica & María Alicia Langa Laorga, *Sobre la historia actual: entre política y cultura* (Madrid: Abada Editores, 2005); Gérard Imbert, *Los discursos del cambio: imágenes e imaginarios sociales en la España de la Transición (1976–1982)*, trans. Beatriz Simó (Madrid: Akal, 1990).

8 James C. Scott, *Los dominados y el arte de la resistencia: discursos ocultos*, trad. Jorge Aguilar (México D.F.: Era, 2000).

9 See *Towards a Cultural Archive of ‘la Movida’: Back to the Future*, ed. William J. Nichols & H. Rosi Song (Lanham: Fairleigh Dickinson U. P., 2014).

10 Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1996), 16–17.

11 Jorge Pérez, ‘Queer Traces in the Soundtrack of *la Movida*’, in *Towards a Cultural Archive of ‘la Movida*’, ed. Nichols & Song, 135–54 (p. 137).

much comfort to publishers, who were still subject to the threat of prosecution for content deemed to be subversive; such as in cases infringing the moral code and/or the sanctity of the family. Nevertheless, in the case of the latter, the judiciary was granted the power to review the imposition of any executive sanctions.

The process for dismantling the repressive Francoist structures regarding freedom of expression was protracted. Whilst the first steps came with the ratification of the Royal Decree 24/1977—according to which the administration could no longer suspend publications—those magazines containing obscene or pornographic content could still be penalized.¹² The subsequent approval of the 1978 Spanish Constitution in principle spelled the definitive liquidation of censorship. Nevertheless, the document's vagueness regarding freedom of expression meant that many decisions related to the press remained to be defined and were therefore dependent on the discretion of the judiciary. In this vein, the explicit treatment of eroticism and sexuality, a true taboo for conservative morality that still permeated the legal system, caused the greatest number of conflicts between the hegemonic discourse of the era and the magazine's countercultural content. The archival material indicates that, in the end, the appeal to the redemptive effect of laughter was the loop-hole via which the pieces that had been sanctioned by the Prosecutor's Office were most frequently later acquitted in court.

The present study, therefore, seeks to explore the unique strategies employed by *El Papus* in order to effect its dissent against the extant legal framework and dominant cultural norms—imbued as they were with explicitly Catholic values. To that end, the investigation offers a detailed analysis of the heretofore unexamined administrative and judicial archives relating to the dissemination of subversive content in *El Papus*. Specifically, it will consider the publication's use of visual—rather than textual—content as the point from which its contributors pushed most emphatically at the boundaries of permissible expression through their own brand of visual metaphors. My consultation of state-generated documents from the 1970s not only scrutinizes the political power wielded by the ruling class, it reveals the conditions under which the archive was placed under 'house arrest' throughout Francoism and the early years of democracy.¹³ Confronting what Derrida has described as the 'domiciliation' or the permanent 'dwelling' of archival material within privileged institutional spaces,¹⁴ this essay engages the following documents to re-evaluate the Francoist archive and a history in which elites held the power to write the

12 Ignacio Fernández Sarasola, *La legislación sobre historieta en España: desde sus orígenes hasta la actualidad* (Sevilla: Asociación Cultural Tebeosfera, 2014).

13 Derrida, *Archive Fever*, trans. Prenowitz, 2.

14 Derrida, *Archive Fever*, trans. Prenowitz, 2.

law and to act as its guardians. In other words, the analysis that follows designates an ‘institutional passage from the private to the public’,¹⁵ uncovering documents that have never before been appraised in relation to the dissensual material that first inspired their composition, publication and eventual concealment within the Francoist archive.

Sample and Methodology

The collated material was sourced from the Archivo General de la Administración in Alcalá de Henares and a series of personal files pertaining to Carlos Navarro, *El Popus*’ editor throughout its fraught existence. This collection comprises 164 pieces dating from 1973 to 1979; of these, 44 are official documents which refer to 124 examples. The make-up of these pieces includes: statements of objections; allegations; sentences; and letters that will serve as noteworthy and valuable sources for researchers in the field of satirical journalism during the Transition. Complementing this approach are the specific sources referred to in the documentation and a series of in-depth interviews with Navarro himself during his time as CEO of the publication’s editorial house.¹⁶

In its survey of the primary archival source material, as well as those pieces of visual and textual humour referenced therein, the essay applies a methodological framework underpinned by a combination of discourse and content analysis.¹⁷ This critical lens is further informed by feminist criticism of the period,¹⁸ exploring the specific context of women as practitioners and

15 Derrida, *Archive Fever*, trans. Prenowitz, 2.

16 *El Popus* was initially published by ELF Ediciones, a subsidiary of the *La Vanguardia* group. The numerous objections raised against the magazine led the group’s owner, Javier Godó, to drop the publication and on 17 August 1974, the 44th number of *El Popus* was the last to be published by ELF. From that moment, the publishing house Ediciones Amaika took over the management of the weekly satirical magazine. Amaika had been created in June 1974 by *El Popus*’ editor, Xavier de Echarri, who was named president, along with Carlos Navarro as managing director and the cartoonists Óscar in the role of secretary and member of the board and Gin as another member of the board.

17 With the goal of systemizing and, therefore, quantifying results through inferential statistics, use has been made of a dual analytic framework pertaining to the investigative group GRICOHUSA (Grupo de Investigación, Comunicación, Humor y Sátira), <<http://www.gricohusa.es/equipo-de-investigacion/>>, to which I belong. Within this research collective both formal-quantitative (month; year; author; section; visual type) and qualitative-content analysis (primary theme; objective; intention) have been deployed to better understand and interpret data from the period in question.

18 Aguas Vivas Catalá & Enriqueta García Pascual, *Una mirada otra al sexismo lingüístico* (València: Generalitat Valenciana, 1987); Celia Amorós, *Tiempo de feminismo: sobre feminismo, proyecto ilustrado y postmodernidad* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1997); Celia Amorós, *La gran diferencia y sus pequeñas consecuencias: para las luchas de las mujeres* (Madrid: Cátedra, 2005); Seyla Benhabib, *Los derechos de los otros: extranjeros, residentes y ciudadanos*, trad. Gabriel Zadunaisky (Barcelona: Gedisa, 2005); Amelia Valcárcel,

subjects of visual print media in 1970s and 1980s Spain, whilst reflecting upon the creation ‘of a new “democratic female citizen” [which] proved to be a conflicted and ultimately unresolved process’.¹⁹ On the one hand, discourse analysis has been used to identify the language and discursive strategies adopted to classify the order of the day; broadly mapped to notions of accusation and defence, in terms of the officials and *El Papus*’ graphic journalists respectively. On the other hand, content analysis focuses on the underlying message of those pieces published in the weekly that were subject to censorial intervention and/or prosecution. To account for the question of gendered humour within the given context, a productive point for consideration lies in Sheri Klein’s work; in particular, her claim that ‘humor [...] can be used both to subordinate and liberate’, and that it has ‘the power to break the mold’, but also to reinforce perceptions couched in repressive patriarchal attitudes.²⁰ Since an exhaustive discussion of each piece goes beyond its scope, following a preliminary analysis of the material, the present study instead offers representative examples in order to: consider whether the weightier critique resided in the visual or the textual signifiers; and to focus on gender to explore the extent to which these products can be considered to have participated in the definition of evolving social roles.

El Papus: A Grotesque Mirror of Spanish Society

It is of note that the first charge levied against *El Papus* was issued prior to its initial public release due to an advertising strip the magazine printed on page 2 of *Tele/eXprés* on 29 September 1973. Depicting a couple in bed, the woman exhibits sexual desire whilst the husband, who says he is tired, hands her a copy of *El Papus* to satisfy her. Pleased by her response, the husband concludes: ‘Tenga siempre un Papus a mano, en su mesilla de noche. Un Papus a la semana es cosa sana’. This advertisement would incite the Public Prosecutor to file charges against the magazine in accordance with Article 2 of the Fraga Law and Article 566-5° of the Criminal Code. According to the legislation, cases of threats to morals, so-called acceptable behaviour and/or public decency would be considered an infraction with the subsequent limitation on freedom of expression and the right to disseminate information.

Feminismo en un mundo global (Madrid: Cátedra, 2008); and Mercedes Bengoechea, ‘Cuerpos hablados, cuerpos negados y el fascinante devenir del género gramatical’, *BHS*, XCII:1 (2015), 1–24.

19 Pamela Radcliff, ‘Citizens and Housewives: The Problem of Female Citizenship in Spain’s Transition to Democracy’, *Journal of Social History*, 36:1 (2002), 77–100 (p. 77).

20 Sheri Klein, ‘Breaking the Mold with Humor: Images of Women in the Visual Media’, *Marilyn Zurmuehlin Working Papers in Art Education*, 10 (1991), 29–37 (p. 35).

The Public Prosecution Office was undoubtedly influenced by the fact that this was a visual representation of a private scene, which implicitly refers to the couple's sexual behaviour. The magazine's subversive humour, in the face of the puritanical silence of the hegemonic social order in questions of sexual activity, hinges on *double entendre* and innuendo, which is made all the more suggestive with the inclusion of a racy image. However, the argument was that this type of playful suggestiveness was a common resource in the participatory culture and the mass media of the time, something underlined by José Sánchez, the then-presiding judge of the Municipal Court, when delivering his verdict:

[...] la constatada frecuencia con que, no ya en mensajes publicitarios, sino en las páginas de la prensa, sean diarios o revistas gráficas, y en las de humor, se recurre a las expresiones de doble sentido—o único—bordeando el eterno problema de lo erótico, para que en casos como el enjuiciado, surja la ironía por ese doble sentido.²¹

Moreover, in his address, the judge acknowledges that notions of 'buenas costumbres' or 'decencia pública'—to which the prosecution had alluded—'están experimentando una evolución en los últimos diez años' due to the influence of the foreign media and 'la afluencia de costumbres de otros países que siempre acusaron, respecto del nuestro, mayor liberalismo en la libertad de costumbres'.²² Therefore, the judge acquitted the magazine after clarifying that what might have been previously considered 'un ataque al decoro social' could at this point in time be seen as 'inocuo' and 'indiferente'.²³ Concluding that, if the administration 'no usa de sus propios medios para la corrección', then he could find no objective reason to penalize this parody of a marriage that he personally considered to be in bad taste.²⁴ Therefore, the judge considered the systemic loop-hole to lie with the administration since by giving license to this type of publication from an objective perspective its contents could not be subsequently censured. At this point, it is worth remembering that from the late 1960s, Spain's cinema and publishing houses had experienced a shift in the representation of affective and sexual expression in society of the time, authorized by technocratic ministers and a regime in full developmental flow. As Ignacio Fontes and Manuel Ángel Menéndez, and Ricardo Manuel Martín de la Guardia have pointed out, the media began to enjoy a modicum of critical freedom throughout this period as evidenced by the

21 'Sentencia del Tribunal Municipal nº 7 sobre el juicio de faltas 5/73 abierto a raíz de la querrela fiscal contra el anuncio publicitario de *El Papus*', from the private collections of Carlos Navarro.

22 'Sentencia del Tribunal Municipal nº 7'.

23 'Sentencia del Tribunal Municipal nº 7'.

24 'Sentencia del Tribunal Municipal nº 7'.

progressive inclusion of graphic humour and opinion columns.²⁵ With that said, whilst some freedom of expression was made possible at this time, by no means did it reflect the limitations facing a new generation of young Spaniards yearning to participate more actively in the political life of their nation. What we find behind a certain communicative tolerance is that the state continued to find a way to manage these ideological pressures by limiting dissensual content through the meting out of fines, suspensions and closures.

Crucially, *El Papus*' portrait of the 'typical' Spanish housewife of the era is that of a woman suffering from boredom, dissatisfaction and frustration. Indeed, according to feminist analyses of the period,²⁶ these responses were hardly surprising, given the limited context within which women's lives played out; with few expectations beyond a familial role, and a lack of appreciation for the activities she carried out. However, via its visual portrayal, *El Papus* goes beyond this reflection and seeks to provoke laughter by exaggerating the wife's bad mood in a less-than flattering depiction: the wife's grotesque features reinforce her husband's casting of her in the role of tyrant. Such representations evince what Temma Kaplan has argued regarding notions of a new 'female consciousness', or a new-found understanding of what a particular 'historical period expect[s] from women, [which, in turn] creates a sense of rights and obligations that provides motive force for actions'.²⁷ Turning the classic image of a traditional 'her-indoors' on its head by casting the housewife as a power-hungry despot, therefore, destabilizes fixed notions of female identity and, as a result, provides a glimpse into the political intensities bubbling up to the surface during late Francoism and in the early years of democracy in Spain. Menacing portrayals of a New Woman—much like those produced a century earlier in *fin-de-siècle* literature—provided a template for 'the conceptualization of new configurations of gender for both men and women' in 1970s Spain.²⁸ The subsequent establishment and political activity of groups such as the Asociación Castellana de Amas de Casa y Consumidoras (ACACC) in 1972 reflects this shift in attitudes regarding new norms of 'appropriate' behaviour

25 Ignacio Fontes & Manuel Angel Menéndez, *El Parlamento de papel: las revistas españolas en la Transición democrática* (Madrid: APM, 2004), 21 & 41–42; Martín de la Guardia, *Cuestión de tijeras*, 184.

26 María Ángeles Larumbe, *Una inmensa minoría: influencia y feminismo en la Transición* (Zaragoza: Prensas Univ. de Zaragoza, 2002); Mercedes Arbaiza Vilallonga, '“Dones en Transició”: el feminismo como acontecimiento emocional', in *Mujeres, dones, mulleres, emakumeak: estudios sobre la historia de las mujeres y del género*, ed. Teresa María Ortega López, Ana M. Aguado & Elena Hernández Sandoica (Madrid: Cátedra, 2019), 267–86.

27 Temma Kaplan, 'Female Consciousness and Collective Action: The Case of Barcelona, 1910–1918', *Feminist Theory*, 7:3 (1982), 545–66 (p. 545).

28 Akiko Tsuchiya, *Marginal Subjects: Gender and Deviance in fin-de-siècle Spain* (Toronto/Buffalo: Univ. of Toronto Press, 2011), 24.

for women, as these homemakers demanded penal reforms,²⁹ ‘took the risk of publicly criticising the mayor of Madrid after he had rudely scoffed at the idea at a married woman should be allowed to work’,³⁰ and published a manifesto calling for equal rights in June 1974. As Lorraine Ryan has argued, the congregation of Spanish housewives in the 1970s served a ‘highly political’ function with a ‘woman’s organisation approved by the Regime’—the ACACC—at the forefront of anti-Francoist dissidence as early as the spring of 1973.³¹

El Pápus was first published in the third week of October 1973 with a cover image that addressed the social issues affecting Spain at that time: the contamination of food, crime, women’s rights, education, pollution and *machismo*. Its anarchic criticism and the primacy given to visual content, attracted a middle- to upper-middle-class readership and boasted the highest circulation figures for publications of its kind between 1975 and 1976. However, the interrogation of social attitudes structured by an unmistakably Spanish brand of *machismo*—addressed in its seventh number in response to the new feminist wave—brought the publication to the attention of the Administration. In response to this particular number, the Director General of the Press, Manuel Blanco Tobío, demanded that *El Pápus*’ editor provide explanations for the publication of nine items that, in his opinion, were an attack on morality. The pieces ridiculed the so-called *macho ibérico*, demystifying his virility and contained implicit references to sex.

Thus, when examining the censor’s motives for raising a complaint, we find references to a range of cartoons that visually parody and ridicule masculinity and male virility, whilst two strips were sanctioned for their erotic content. The first was Jorge Ginés’ (Gin) *El Alcalde Zelamea* [*sic*] (Figure 1)—a parody of the film *La Leyenda del Alcalde de Zalamea* (dir. Mario Camus, 1972)—in which sexual references appeared in two of the panels. In the first, a man is depicted fondling a woman in a haystack and in the other, reflecting the reality of the 1970s context, a couple is shown kissing in the cinema whilst a man who watches them a few chairs away comments: ‘como la película es un cardo borriquero algo tengo que hacer para entretenerme’ to imply that he was masturbating. Through this visual gag, the magazine derides this habitual practice which ‘le podrían contar

29 Mary Salas & Mercedes Comabella, ‘Asociaciones de mujeres y movimiento feminista’, in *Españolas en la Transición: de excluidas a protagonistas (1973–1982)*, ed. Asociación Mujeres en la Transición Democrática (Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 1999), 25–126 (p. 42).

30 Monica Threlfall, ‘Gendering the Transition to Democracy: Reassessing the Impact of Women’s Activism’, in *Gendering Spanish Democracy*, ed. Monica Threlfall, Christine Cousins & Celia Valiente Fernández (London/New York: Routledge, 2005), 11–54 (p. 23).

31 Lorraine Ryan, ‘A Case Apart: The Evolution of Spanish Feminism’, in *Feminisms Within and Without. Papers Delivered at the Women’s Studies Conference, National University of Ireland, Galway, July 2005*, ed. Rebecca Pelan (Galway: Univ. of Galway Women’s Studies Centre, 2006), 56–67 (p. 61).

largo taquilleras y acomodadores’, as indicated in the textual content of the cartoon. In addition to depicting the objectification of the female body, *El Papus* also draws attention to the rebellious behaviour of young Spanish couples who defied the prohibition of public displays of affection in place since 1973.



Figure 1

Extract from the strip ‘El Alcalde Zelamea’ (GIN), *El Papus*, 7 (1973), 24–25. Reproduced by permission of ECC Ediciones (Barcelona) (NIF B-60977527).



10

Figure 2a

Extract from the strip 'A la búsqueda del machismo perdido' (JA),
El Papis, 7 (1973), 10–11.

Reproduced by permission of ECC Ediciones (Barcelona) (NIF B-60977527).

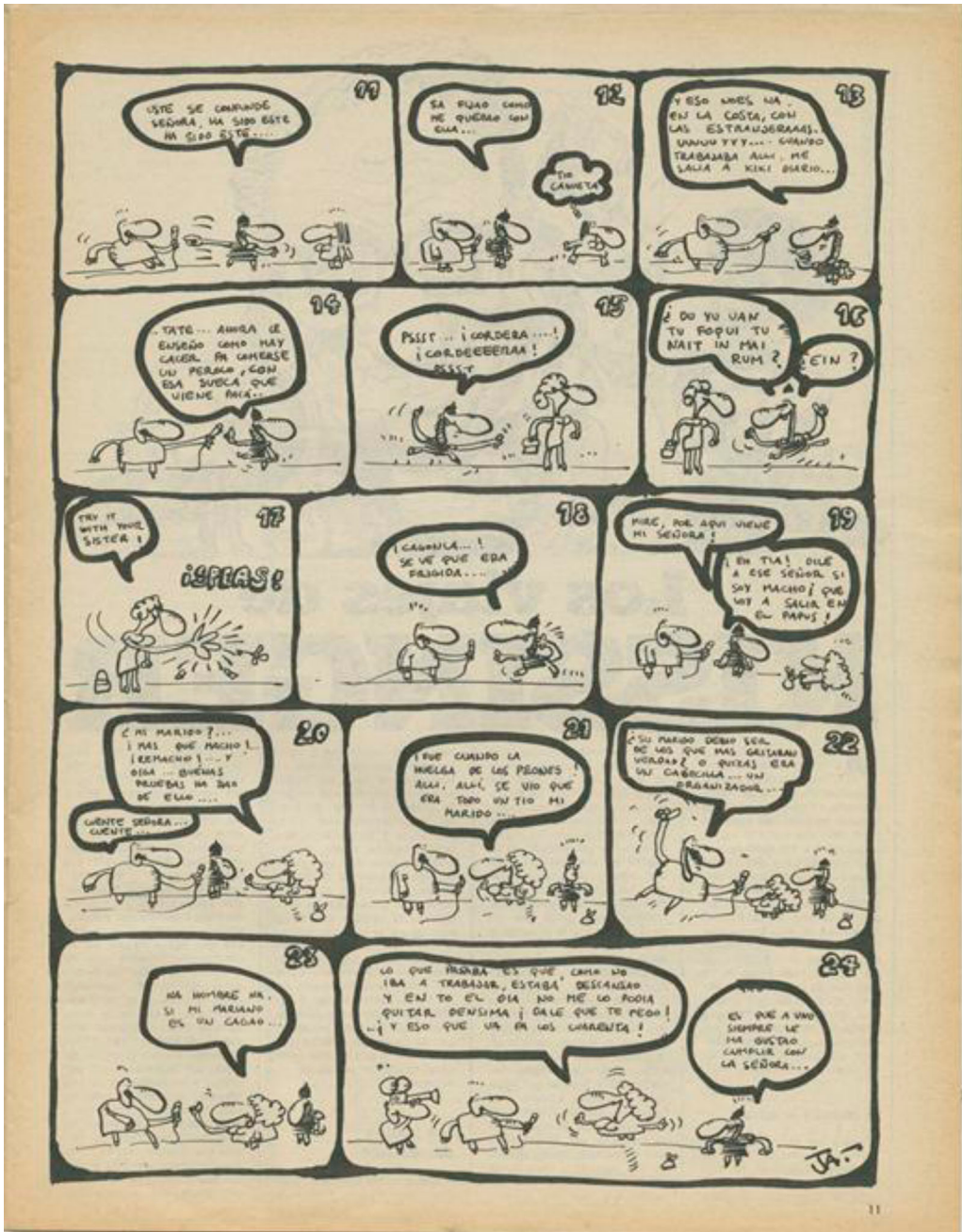


Figure 2b
Extract from the strip 'A la búsqueda del machismo perdido' (JA),
El Papus, 7 (1973), 10–11.
Reproduced by permission of ECC Ediciones (Barcelona) (NIF B-60977527).

In ‘Encuesta Papus’ (Figures 2a & 2b), a section designed by Jordi Amorós (JA), text appears in the speech bubbles which contain an array of sexual references, and improvisational sketch-like drawing exposes predominant stereotypes of Spanish society—in this case of husband and wife—whilst elucidating the magazine’s highly symbolic approach to cultural and political expression. In this case, the censor objected to a female character’s complaints about her husband: ‘En to el día no me lo podía quitar densima. ¡Dale que te pego!’, due to *double entendre* that referenced the husband’s obsession with sex. However, the official ignored in this same story the joke about domestic violence in Spain, seen in expressions such as ‘¡Yo a mi señora la doy cada somanta que la baldo! ¿Usté no la pega a la suya? Es cay que ser muy macho pacerlo’.

The next issue, Number 8—entitled ‘Los Novios’—was also subject to legal action due to several panels wherein visual metonyms were used to express erotic content: a car in a forest with a couple inside, the purchase of cinema tickets in the so-called *mancos* (the back row) or the joy in the eyes of Spaniards who managed to make it to France to see the film *Last Tango in Paris* (dir. Bernardo Bertolucci, 1972).³² The administration objected to the graphic and textual representation of the interstitial spaces sought out by contemporary Spanish couples in order to get around the prohibition of displays of affection in the public sphere. Similarly, the administration condemned the magazine’s graphic references to brothels, identifiable by their association with light bulbs and *madames*; these are spaces, according to the magazine, where men go to satisfy their needs in the sexually repressive climate. It could be said, therefore, that the magazine holds up a grotesque graphic mirror to the reality of Spain in the 1970s, and it is this process of mirroring that the pillars of journalistic control would not tolerate.

Given the steady stream of complaints, Joaquín Forn, *El Papus’* lawyer, wrote to Xavier de Echarri in December 1973, flagging a potential underlying problem:

Una simple lectura de los dos Pliegos de Cargos me hace pensar que la cosa es realmente grave. Se trata de encausar los números casi totalmente y esto, la experiencia lo demuestra, suele ocurrir cuando alguien del Ministerio o quizás a nivel de Gobierno, ha decidido preparar la imposición de sanciones muy graves. Basta recordar a estos efectos el estilo del Pliego de Cargos que motivó la suspensión de *La Codorniz* por cuatro meses. Creo que ello nos obliga a tratar el asunto al máximo nivel.³³

32 Due to censorship the film was not released in Spain until 1977.

33 Joaquín Forn, letter to Xavier de Echarri, 19 December 1973, from the private collections of Carlos Navarro.

In light of his suspicions, Forn requested that Echarri answer the accusations one by one, as a matter of routine. Number 10—from Christmas 1973—brought *El Pápus* its first conviction, with the Prosecutor pointing to seven offending pieces (five visual and two textual). The majority of these criticized the restrictive and economically fragile state in which Spanish families lived, evocative of the ‘unhappy 40s’. Others of those mentioned return to sexual humour, such as the drawing of a woman who, with her eyes wide, shows between her two outstretched palms ‘el trozo de carne’ that she would like to have of actor Steve McQueen; the censor objecting on this occasion to a woman’s overt expression of sexual appetite.

Just as the Municipal Court had previously found no fault with these pieces, the Court of Instruction invoked the jurisprudence established by the Supreme Court (in a judgment dated 2 May 1967) to justify the innocuous nature of these works:

En el momento actual de la evolución de nuestras costumbres pudiendo no existir tal ofensa si la comunidad cuyo sentido de la decencia constituye el bien jurídico protegido, no sufre conmoción estimable, sea cual fuere su grado, ante la situación, trabajo, comportamiento o conducta que se le presente, porque su desarrollo cultural, moral o sociológico, le hace inmune frente a tal hecho.³⁴

Nevertheless, the Court of Instruction did take exception to one of the identified pieces: that of the weekly column written by journalist Maruja Torres under the far-from-trivial pseudonym, ‘Jane the Mad’.³⁵ The text in question encouraged women to adopt an emancipated and proactive attitude towards sexual relations, implying that they should be the ones—rather than men—who take the initiative. This promotion of female subjectivity and agency flew in the face of prevalent Catholic-conservative attitudes towards gender, which expounded submission to male authority, and an unrelenting focus on motherhood and the home. According to the judge:

[Si bien en las piezas encausadas] cabe apreciar la intranscendencia jurídico-penal, dado el carácter y finalidad eminentemente festivo de los

34 ‘Sentencia del Juzgado de Instrucción nº 7 sobre el juicio de faltas de imprenta abierto a raíz de la querrela fiscal contra el número 10 de *El Pápus*’, from the private collections of Carlos Navarro.

35 Queen Juana I of Castile, popularly known as ‘Juana the Mad’, has typically been portrayed as a sexually insatiable woman, always seeking fulfilment through love and motherhood or stability in marriage, values that would come to define the Francoist mark of femininity. Indeed, she was the figure selected by the regime to represent an autarkic Spain ignored by Europe in the film *Locura de amor* (dir. Juan de Orduña, 1948). See María Donapetry, ‘Juana la Loca en tres siglos: de Tamayo y Baus a Aranda pasando por Orduña’, *Hispanic Research Journal*, 6:2 (2005), 147–54.

mismos, no vulnerando los sentimientos legalmente protegidos de la moral, buenas costumbres o la decencia pública. [...] Caso distinto es el del trabajo [...] del que es su autora Maruja Torres, ya que, en el mismo, bajo una falsa apariencia de intranscendencia, frivolidad y pretendido humor, se menoscaba el sentimiento del pudor y de las buenas costumbres.³⁶

It is of particular note here that Maruja Torres was not afforded the same latitude as her male counterparts in terms of *animus iocandi*. Indeed, two additional aspects differentiate her case from the rest. Thus far, all pieces of an erotic nature had been cast through the prism of the male gaze and created by male contributors, consistently rehearsed according to the established and accepted patriarchal order. Further, in both graphic and textual elements, Don Juanism and the archetypal submissive woman are consistently represented. However, in this particular example, the ‘offending’ piece concerns a woman with agency who is in control and articulating her sexual desire through an extended textual *exposé*. Therein lies the second difference; the case in question concerns a column i.e., text rather than image. This situation initially seems at odds with the observations above regarding the proclivity for citing visual, over textual content for prosecution. However, a review of the archival records as a whole suggests that at the stage of judicial appeal, there appeared to be more sympathy for the ‘only-a-joke’ argument in favour of graphic—over textual—humour. Just as artists harnessed the dissensual power of visual print media to ‘show’ that which could not be said, those tasked with vetting that same content often struggled to articulate the exact infraction caused by the cartoons in question. As a result, many pieces were subsequently exonerated for lack of a robust case.

The Threat of Administrative Reprisal

In March 1974, Joaquín Forn’s fears were realized with the prosecution of the magazine’s twenty-first Number (‘Los Hijos’). The Press Authority warned that the publication of immoral texts and above all provocative images with erotic content that undermined the traditional Francoist notion of the family would lead to ‘la exigencia de la correspondiente responsabilidad administrativa’.³⁷ In other words, the authorities would be in a position to begin proceedings to shut down the publication if it were deemed that its

36 ‘Sentencia del Juzgado de Instrucción n° 7 sobre el juicio de faltas de imprenta abierto a raíz de la querrela fiscal contra el número 10 de *El Papus*’, from the private collections of Carlos Navarro.

37 ‘Comunicación de la Delegación Provincial de Barcelona del Ministerio de Información y Turismo, sección Prensa, con registro de salida n° 6842 y fecha del 28 de marzo de 1974, al director de *El Papus*’, from the private collections of Carlos Navarro.

thematic content did not accurately reflect that listed in the official register. Significantly, in the case of *El Pappus*, the editors had previously declared that it would be a publication driven by ‘los principios de debido respeto a las instituciones y a las personas en la crítica de la acción política y administrativa y el respeto a la moral’.³⁸

Among the pieces cited, was the ‘Encuesta Pappus’ by JA—a satirical strip comprising public surveys conducted by a fictional Falangist journalist—which, in this case, concerned the national birth rate. Reflecting on the benefits of copious offspring, the survey considers the health risks posed by contraception. Supported by his exaggerated grotesque, stick figure drawings, JA hints at the economic influences behind Spain’s prohibition of contraception. Specifically, in one of the panels, he depicts an obstetrician’s outrage at seeing his income drop due to a fall in Spain’s birth rate, and as a result his number of deliveries: ‘Pues sabed que la “píldora” [anticonceptiva] produce la lepra, ¡el escorbuto!, ¡el cólera! ... ¡el “delirium tremens”! ... y ... “¡la muerte!”’.

The same issue was also cited by the Public Prosecutor, with the judge condemning two pieces. One was an understated cartoon by Vives (Figures 3a & 3b) in which the reader considers how maternity spells ‘death’ for mothers, except when they are in a position to abort—a procedure undertaken in London—and to continue on with their love lives.³⁹ The other was Maruja Torres’ column, in which she advises that if parents really want to give sex education to their children, they should send them to school abroad.

As such, in these two examples, the magazine portrays women’s lack of sexual freedom at the time, an experience described María Ángeles Larumbe as:

La falta de una adecuada formación sexual en las escuelas, unida a las dificultades de todo orden con las que se encontraban las jóvenes de aquella época para conseguir anticonceptivos les abocaba, en un número de casos cada vez más alarmante, a recurrir al aborto, de los que se practicaban mil clandestinos al día [sin contar a todas las españolas que lo hacían en Londres o Ámsterdam]. A comienzos de los años setenta el debate público sobre el tema en nuestro país se abordaba con mucha cautela, porque los prejuicios y el ordenamiento jurídico impedían que fuera de otro modo.⁴⁰

38 ‘Solicitud para la inscripción del semanario en el Registro de Empresas Periodísticas firmada por Esteban Molist, presidente del consejo de administración de ELF Editores, el 2 de mayo de 1973’, from the Archivo General de la Administración (IDD [09]009.001.001, caja 316 Top. 53/41.702-42.706, exp. 3235: *El Pappus*).

39 The subject of abortion made headlines in October 1976 when *El País* addressed the experiences of Spanish women who fled the country on a yearly basis to terminate unwanted pregnancies in a feature story. See Neliana Tersigni, ‘Abortar en Londres’, *El País*, 3 October 1976, n.p.; available online at <https://elpais.com/elpais/2011/11/24/actualidad/1322120268_850215.html> (accessed 18 August 2020).

40 María Ángeles Larumbe, *Una inmensa minoría*, 146.



Figure 3a

Strip published by Vives in *El Papus*, 10 (1973), 8–9.

Reproduced by permission of ECC Ediciones (Barcelona) (NIF B-60977527).



Figure 3b

Strip published by Vives in *El Popus*, 10 (1973), 8-9.

Reproduced by permission of ECC Ediciones (Barcelona) (NIF B-60977527).

Here, then, we see an example of divergent understandings and ways to reflect upon the legal and cultural conditions that came to define the Transition period from a gendered perspective. Whilst in the public sphere and within the pages of *El Pápus*, we are presented with ‘un nuevo sujeto, o una nueva categoría, en singular, la categoría mujer’,⁴¹ the judicial authority—whilst recognizing changes in Spanish social customs—viewed the sexual liberation of women as a disruptive force that would lead to social disorder. Let us not forget that the primary value assigned to women by the Francoist regime was fundamentally linked to reproduction, which concretized ‘a dysfunctional double standard for sexual behaviour and expectations of husband and wife [that] penalized contraception, adultery, abortion, and divorce’.⁴² As Rosa Montero reminds us, until 1975 ‘a married woman in Spain could not open a bank account, buy a car, apply for a passport, or even work without her husband’s permission’.⁴³ The stark contrast between images of an increasingly sexualized female body and a deteriorating Francoist body politic ushered in ‘a political opening’ throughout late Francoism and into the *destape* period.⁴⁴ The literal unveiling of female desire in the mid to late 1970s made way for a series of ‘counter-images of seductive womanhood’ that would forever destabilize the regime’s now seemingly antiquated discourse on gender, female sexuality, and family values.⁴⁵ Thus, the work being printed in the pages of *El Pápus* clashed head-on with Francoist rhetoric of motherhood as women’s sole social function and the home as their natural place, putting democracy ‘on display’ in the guise of a naked and/or sexually liberated female body—revealed for the entire world to see.⁴⁶

Coinciding with a change in editorial management, when *El Pápus*’ art department was taken over by Óscar Nebreda and Gin following the production of Numbers 22 and 23 (March 1974), the weekly replaced its illustrated covers with photographs of women in bikinis or underwear. This

41 Mercedes Arbaiza Vilallonga, ‘“Dones en Transició”: el feminismo como acontecimiento emocional’, 282.

42 See the editorial note for ‘Esperanza Vaello Esquerdo, Delitos de adulterio y amancebamiento (The Crime of Adultery and Cohabitation, 1976)’, in *The Modern Spain Sourcebook: A Cultural History from 1600 to the Present*, ed. Aurora G. Morcillo, María Asunción Gómez, Paula De la Cruz-Fernández & José Manuel Morcillo-Gómez (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 251–54 (p. 251).

43 Rosa Montero, ‘The Silent Revolution: The Social and Cultural Advances of Women in Democratic Spain’, in *Spanish Cultural Studies: An Introduction*, ed. Jo Labanyi & Helen Graham (Oxford: Oxford U. P., 1995), 381–85 (p. 381).

44 Aurora G. Morcillo, ‘Gender’, in *The History of Modern Spain: Chronologies, Themes, Individuals*, ed. Adrian Shubert & José Álvarez Junco (London: Bloomsbury, 2018), 165–79 (p. 168).

45 Morcillo, ‘Gender’, 175.

46 Morcillo, ‘Gender’, 176.

shift towards provocative photography was, in the main, part of a marketing strategy designed to increase circulation figures, whilst participating in the widening objectification of the female body at the time, through flashes of naked flesh in the theatre, television and cinema.⁴⁷ This transgressive exhibitionism, as a precursor to the *destape* period, offers a reading of the moment as one of flexibility and change which disavows the contemporaneous static and homogenous political scene. A contributing factor that facilitated the publication's aesthetic shift was the appointment in January 1974 of Pío Cabanillas as Minister for Information and Tourism. According to Ricardo Martín de la Guardia, Pío: 'con fama de persona abierta y dialogante, [...] era un entusiasta de la apertura; pretendía acabar con la sensación de distancia y ocultamiento de la alta política gubernamental respecto a la gente de la calle' whilst also insisting that 'el Gobierno debía apreciar la misión crítica asignada a los medios en las sociedades actuales'.⁴⁸

Nevertheless, prosecutors were quick to single out these photographs, 'cuyas características pudieran considerarse atentatorias del artículo 2º de la vigente Ley de Prensa' since they undermined the patriarchal norms and morals underpinning Spanish society. Consequently, the General Press Office warned that the repeated publication of these types of photographs would incur sanctions. The Director of *El Pápus* responded to the document of the Provincial Delegate of the General Press Office, alleging

[...] el bikini forma parte de las costumbres y hábitos de nuestra época y que su exhibición en playas y piscinas, espectáculos, películas y prensa viene siendo admitido y tolerado por nuestra sociedad, sin considerar que constituye una ofensa a la moral social o pública ni producir efectos perniciosos en la conciencia social. El Tribunal Supremo en sentencia de fecha 26 de febrero de 1970, analiza la cuestión precisamente en relación con una posible infracción del artículo 2º de la Ley de Prensa e Imprenta, llegando a la conclusión de que su publicación carecía de la relevancia suficiente para configurar la infracción del citado artículo.⁴⁹

But the bikini, not to mention the thong—a particular obsession amongst *El Pápus*' cartoonists, who dedicated an entire issue to it, which was unsurprisingly indicted on the grounds of its graphic content—was more than a simple item of clothing in 1970s Spain. The fear with which the authorities regarded this garment, as was the case with the miniskirt, lay with its

47 Such strategies were deployed as early as 1976 by well-known graphic publications such as *Lib*, *Papillón* and *Interviú*.

48 Martín de la Guardia, *Cuestión de tijeras*, 84–86.

49 Letter from Xavier de Echarri, signed 22 April 1974, to Juan Antonio Alberich, Provincial Delegate of the Ministerio de Información y Turismo, from the private collections of Carlos Navarro.

significance. Indeed, as Pedro Mansilla notes: ‘Más allá de su valor estético, quien se ponía un bikini de alguna manera proclamaba su derecho a la exhibición de su cuerpo. La mujer proclamaba que era independiente, que era libre y que, por lo tanto, se vestía como le daba la gana’.⁵⁰ The emancipation of the bikini was a graphic signifier of women’s independence, and this visual metonym became a weekly staple of the magazine’s cartoonists, doubtless serving the dual purpose of validating a social norm whilst simultaneously titillating its majority male readership. At the time, the Vatican had deemed the bikini ‘sinful’ and its use was prohibited for Italian and Spanish citizens on their respective beaches until it became popular in the 1970s. Contributing to this normalization were the initial efforts of the weekly visual publications, even those which were merely illustrative, such as *Bocaccio*, *Lui* or *Papillón*, as well as those of humour and investigative journalism such as *Interviú*, which parodied Spanish *costumbrismo* and the commotion this simple item of clothing caused men of the time.

The jurisprudence of the Supreme Court, which provided a liberalizing loop-hole, was sometimes questioned regarding statements made by ordinary court judges, one of whom remarked:

El hecho de que se llegue a una conclusión absolutoria no *empeca* [*sic*] para que se siga estimando que publicaciones como la enjuiciada merecen una atención más permanente por parte de la autoridad civil que reprimiera esas publicaciones que más que formar, deforman; que más que instruir, impiden la formación de una conciencia social media, ponderada y válida para todas las convivencias.⁵¹

From March 1974 there was a discernible shift in the pieces brought under scrutiny by the authorities. From this point, rather than cartoon strips, attention was focused on photographs of erotic content, which typically appeared in the inside spread ‘Papunovela’.⁵² Nevertheless, whilst the judiciary could be seen to be less punitive as time went on, such relative permissiveness in terms of cartoons did not extend to attacks on the Catholic Church nor the institution of marriage. An example is the censuring of the cartoonist Soc for a strip published in Number 29 of *El Papus* in which a notice posted at the church door read: ‘entre el amor

50 Noelia Fariña, ‘Cómo la persecución del bikini provocó la creación de Benidorm’, *El País*, 24 July 2018, n.p.; available online at <https://elpais.com/elpais/2018/07/21/icon/1532154319_291950.html> (accessed 14 April 2020).

51 ‘Sentencia y tasas del Juzgado Municipal nº 7 de Barcelona resolutivas de la querrela fiscal presentada contra diversas piezas publicadas en *El Papus* nº 26’, from the private collections of Carlos Navarro.

52 ‘Papunovela’ was a fixture of the publication, which comprised a photo-narrative starring contributors and members of the editorial team parodying a central theme of the magazine.

decente y el otro solo hay una diferencia: media hora de hipocresía'. Here, the visual metonym of the door of a Catholic Church, offers an additional meaning to the text of a sexual nature. According to the judicial representative, the piece in question suggested

[...] un desprecio manifiesto que se contiene, no solo a cualquier sentimiento religioso, sino también al mínimo decoro que en la prensa hay que tener siempre a sus posibles lectores para ni dañar sentimientos, ni deformarlos.⁵³

El Paps' first seizure during this period took place in January 1975, when Barcelona's Third Court of Instruction accepted the prosecutor's allegation of public scandal against the cover and the centrefold comic, 'Papunovela', of Number 64, which depicted a parody of a female striptease. Once again, *El Paps* was deemed to have broken the rules through the visual alone. In this case, a real image, but it is worth nuancing that this was a puerile sense of erotic humour, with fixed photographic panels against a black background—based on mere insinuation—since the 'strip' ends with the unfastening of the woman's bra. In fact, the piece speaks to a censorship of graphic culture that continues even today with the written lament in the final panel: 'Continuará ... algún día'.⁵⁴

Following these infractions and once approved by the Council of Ministers, the magazine's first suspension—lasting four months—was announced in June 1975:

Los principios de la moral católica como aquellos que han de inspirar la actuación de los órganos estatales para velar por el mantenimiento de las buenas costumbres [por lo que] inspirándose en el fin espiritual de la especie humana, ha de reprobarse como contrario a la moral cuanto propenda al triunfo de las pasiones corporales sobre el espíritu, a la ofuscación de la inteligencia por la sensualidad.⁵⁵

53 'Sentencia y tasas del Juzgado Municipal nº 7 de Barcelona resolutivas de la querrela fiscal presentada contra diversas piezas publicadas en *El Paps* nº 29', from the private collections of Carlos Navarro.

54 Contemporary examples include the censorship of the 18 July 2007 and 5 July 2014 issues of the satirical publication *El Jueves* (1977–). In the wake of the PSOE government's policy offering financial support for every newborn child, the magazine's front cover depicted the Spanish royals Felipe and Letizia engaging in sex with the caption 'Si te quedas preñada ¡Esto va a ser lo más parecido a trabajar que he hecho en mi vida!' In a similar vein, the publication was forced to recall 60,000 copies of its 5 July 2014 issue in order to change the front page, which in the context of his abdication, depicted King Juan Carlos offering his son Felipe a crown covered in dung. In both cases, the assault on the Crown was deemed a step too far.

55 'Resolución del Consejo de Ministros del día 6 de junio de 1975 por el que se declara la primera suspensión de *El Paps* durante cuatro meses, de julio a octubre', from the private collections of Carlos Navarro.

A few months before the suspension, the team at *El Pappus* had published *El Pappus Extra*, a monthly magazine with a proclivity for depicting women in their swimsuits or underwear. From the first (March 1975) to the last (May 1976) each Number was sanctioned by the Public Prosecutor, citing an ‘ataque a la moral’. Driven by these repeated offences committed by its monthly *Extra*, among other reasons, *El Pappus*’ second suspension was declared in April 1976 and lasted for four months. In September of the same year, the Ministry filed for the possible cancellation of the registrations of *El Pappus* and *Papillón*—another magazine of the *destape* period also owned by the Amaika publishing house.

The reason cited applied the Fraga Law’s provisions concerning the integrity and veracity of the registration data. In this regard, the Government maintained that the listed principles and objectives of both magazines in their registration documents had not been respected ‘exacta e íntegramente’. For the legislative authorities, both publications were ‘agentes de destrucción de las convenciones y del anquilosamiento social’.⁵⁶ Xavier de Echarri received the news with natural displeasure, stressing that:

Aunque la nota del Ministerio no marca las líneas concretas y puntos en que las revistas hayan sobrepasado sus objetivos, todos sabemos que se refiere a la cuestión del destape. Todos sabemos que si queremos salir a la calle tenemos que suprimir tetas. Pues bien, si es preciso cambiar la línea de las revistas, la cambiaré. Es algo que me lo exige el deber de que Ediciones Amaika siga manteniendo a tantas familias que dependen del trabajo en estas publicaciones.⁵⁷

Seven out of the ten pieces indicated thus far were prosecuted on the grounds of sexual and/or erotic content. Via its uncompromising exhibition of the female body, treated like a visual weapon, *El Pappus*—liberal, progressive and anarchic, in its nature—faced down the conservative hegemonic discourse of late Francoism, marked by its moralizing puritanism and penchant for female modesty. Combining photographic insinuation with outrageous brush-strokes on its inner pages, the magazine decried the repression of Spanish society at the time. Nevertheless, the culture war waged by its subversive content

56 ‘Expediente 35/76 de posible cancelación de la inscripción del Registro de Empresas Periodísticas con fecha 20 de septiembre de 1976’, from the Archivo General de la Administración (IDD [09]009.001.003, caja 7 Top. 53/81.202-81.301, exp. 35/1976: Ediciones Amaika, S.A. *El Pappus*).

57 José F. Beaumont, ‘Freno administrativo al erotismo de las revistas’, *El País*, 8 October 1976, n.p.; available online at <https://elpais.com/diario/1976/10/08/ultima/213577201_850215.html> (accessed 14 April 2020).

threatened the publication's prospects for both short- and long-term survival. Its approach differed significantly from its European counterparts, as editor José Ilario explains:

En este país se han hecho las cosas al revés, se ha puesto el destape o el máximo escándalo en las portadas y dentro no se ha dado apenas nada. Esta ha sido una fórmula publicitaria más que otra cosa. No obstante, la última palabra la tiene el público, que no es ni tonto ni inmoral.⁵⁸

If the government did not want sex on the front covers it would have to endure political criticism instead. Thus began a stage of *El Papus'* history—coinciding with the constitution of the new Cortes—in which satire of a political nature overshadowed the social. On the front pages, humorous photographs featuring cartoonists and editors replaced those of attractive women. Either via these portraits, or in cartoons, the covers of the weekly launched harsh accusations against politicians of the new right, whom they described as corrupt, fascist and instigators of the violence carried out by extremist organizations. However, there are no reports in the archive relating to this type of content that points to the powers-that-be in the system.

A subsequent judicial ruling, dated June 1977, was issued regarding a piece published in Number 153. The legal declaration on freedom of expression on 1 April 1977 repealed Article 2 of the Fraga Law, and partially suppressed the administrative seizure of publications and recordings. However, this freedom of expression was only afforded in the event that material was not deemed obscene or pornographic in nature; that is to say, those images of naked—or semi-naked—female bodies. In this context, the cartoonist Gin published a photomontage titled 'Sexo y política' (Figure 4), which depicted the four political candidates in the upcoming general election surrounded by bikini-clad women. This piece was considered an affront to Christian morality on two counts. In its visual composition, it calls into question the matrimonial fidelity of the candidates, a critique complemented by the text where the women represent a derision of the defects inherent on each of the parties in question, including that of President Adolfo Suárez. As a result of this piece, Ginés was accused of crimes related to public scandal and contempt for the President of the Government.

Following a Gramscian critique of Almond and Verba's foundational concept of political culture, this essay has attempted to go beyond univocal readings of the source material. Accordingly, the foregrounding of cultural aspects of the extant social experience in Spain—particularly

58 Quoted in Beaumont, 'Freno administrativo al erotismo de las revistas'.



Figure 4

Photomontage published in *El Papus*, 153 (1977), 20.

Reproduced by permission of ECC Ediciones (Barcelona) (NIF B-60977527).



Figure 5

Cover of *El Papus*, 412 (1982), 1.

Reproduced by permission of ECC Ediciones (Barcelona) (NIF B-60977527).

the notion of independent and empowered women—which sought to refute hegemonic models established by the elite.⁵⁹ With the removal of administrative case files, the accusations put forward referred to questions of public scandal in relation to the Catholic Church which continued to act as the moral yard-stick for Spain, despite not being officially cited as such in the country's new constitution. *El Papus* received several complaints on account of caricatures of Pope John Paul II (Karol Józef Wojtyła). In line with the argumentation put forth in this study, one example that stands out was that published in Number 412 of *El Papus* (Figure 5). The cartoonist, Luis Rey, was convicted for portraying the Pope in a swimsuit during the Easter holidays 'en actitud irreverente'. The force behind the derision lies in visual; the Pope is dressed as a *bon vivant*, clad in the type of outfit proscribed by the Church as 'sinful', and with a display of semi-nudity, which leaves little to the imagination. Again, the publication can be seen to be wreaking havoc through its visual critique of the modesty demanded by Catholic Church.

Conclusions

This diachronic investigation of the satirical commentary expounded by *El Papus*—as well as its subsequent treatment by the authorities—as part of a new political culture in Spain, reveals a challenge to the prevailing political order. Through an underground aesthetic underpinned by populist—and at times orthographically distorted—language, the publication sought to undermine at every turn any prevailing sense of decency and public modesty. The concepts of sexual freedom and eroticism, predominantly depicted in the magazine's visual material, were the principal sources for oppositional discourse in the face of Catholic-conservative thinking, which pervaded official spheres throughout the final years of the dictatorship and in the early years of the Transition. Reflecting the evolving social framework of the moment, *El Papus'* women are represented as trapped between structures of oppression—manifested institutionally and legally through strict patriarchal definitions of their role in the society—and a progressive modernization of the customs brought by migration to cities, foreign influence and the feminist liberation movement.

From 1975, the publication weaponized the image of real women through the more explicit medium of photography to challenge the status quo, whilst undermining established and idealized notions of Spanish femininity. Indeed, in its deployment of graphic content, the publication was able to go

59 See Gabriel A. Almond & Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (Princeton: Princeton U. P., 1963).

further in its transgressions, expressing that which was still not possible to verbalize via grotesque, gendered stereotypes of boyfriends, husbands and wives whilst satirizing the socio-political order of the day. In this regard, most of the legislative and judicial charges were motivated by the visual material of the magazine, especially in those cases where women were portrayed as independent subjects with sexual agency. Within this context, however, an important factor that contributed to the freeing up of expression as part of the participative culture of the time was the jurisprudence established by the Supreme Court, which proved to be more lenient than the administrative institutions in its inclination towards the *animus iocandi* of satirical publications. Nevertheless, it should be noted that such judicial latitude in terms of social change did not extend to cases in which women were shown to be evading Francoist constraints regarding the traditional family unit. Not only were these instances penalized, the repeated publication of empowered female figures on the cover of *El Papus* nearly resulted in the permanent closure of the magazine. Indeed, the threat posed by women in charge of their own bodies and in possession of their own ideas represented a significant concern to a national-Catholic elite that was unable to prevent the legalization of contraception (7 October 1978), divorce (7 July 1981), abortion (5 July 1985) and the abolishment of adultery as a criminal offence (26 May 1978).

Recent scholarship has deconstructed the political and cultural programme ushered in by what Guillem Martínez has deemed the ‘Cultura de Transición’ (CT), or the post-Francoist paradigm which sought to stabilize national affairs through ‘la desproblematización de la realidad y [la] preocupación obsesiva por la cohesión y la estabilidad’.⁶⁰ Whilst the conventional press was seen to acquiesce in the process of regime change, *El Papus* forged ahead, ceaselessly attacking a ruling class that continued to restrict civil rights even after the death of Francisco Franco on 20 November 1975. Thus, as this essay has argued, *El Papus* acted not only as a medium from which to adduce veiled criticisms of Francoist ideology, it managed to weaken entrenched cultural practices at a key interval in contemporary Spanish history. A democratic imaginary based on restricted practices took centre stage in the late 1970s,⁶¹ as *El Papus* continued waging war on hegemonic values in Transition-era Spain. These discursive attacks would later provoke

60 Guillem Martínez, ‘El concepto CT’, in *CT o la cultura de la Transición: Crítica a 35 años de cultura española*, ed. Carlos Acevedo et al. (Barcelona: Debolsillo, 2012), 37–52; Luisa Elena Delgado, *La nación singular: fantasías de normalidad democrática española (1996–2011)* (Madrid: Siglo XXI, 2014), 19.

61 Germán Labrador, ‘¿Lo llamaban democracia? La crítica estética de la política en la transición española y el imaginario de la historia en el 15-M’, *Kamchatka. Revista de Análisis Cultural*, 4 (2014), 11–61 (p. 42).

the famous letter bombing of the magazine's editorial office at 77 Carrer dels Tallers in Barcelona that would kill the building's doorman, Juan Peñalver Sandoval, seriously injure twenty others and unsettle the entire media industry. The 'wave of eroticism' produced throughout the *destape* in a range of countercultural outlets fundamentally unsettled the foundations of Francoist society, accelerating a liberalizing process that could no longer be repressed.⁶² As a result, publications such as *El Paps* not only managed to interrogate the ongoing imposition of traditional values, they helped broker a (re)negotiation of civil liberties related to expression, free speech and the role of the media in Francoist and post-Francoist Spain.*

62 Joaquim Roglan, *Revistes d'humor a Catalunya, 1972–1992* (Barcelona: Col·legi de Periodistes de Catalunya, 1996), 17, cited in McGlade, *Catalan Cartoons*, 210.

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