



HALEY O'NEIL<sup>1</sup>

University of Northern Iowa - [haley.oneil@uni.edu](mailto:haley.oneil@uni.edu)

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## MAKING FEMINISM FUNNY: MARUJA TORRES'S PARODIES IN *POR FAVOR*

### RESUMEN:

One of the founding missions of the transition-era political satire magazine *Por favor* was to familiarize the Spanish reading public with fundamental democratic values. As part of this mission the writers, editors, and cartoonists in *Por favor* underscored that political change necessitated a critical examination of how both personal and collective beliefs had been shaped by decades of Francoist ideology. This article focuses on how Maruja Torres, the first feminist author to publish in *Por favor*, parodies the gossip press to interrogate the role of the mass media in enculturating National Catholic family values and reinforcing gender discrimination. By using humor as a means of critique, Torres disarms feminist thought and introduces the goals of the women's liberation movement to the predominantly male audience of *Por favor*.

PALABRAS CLAVE: literary journalism, Maruja Torres, feminism, parody, transition.

### ABSTRACT:

Uno de los objetivos principales de *Por favor*, una revista de sátira política de la transición española, fue familiarizar al público español con los valores fundamentales de la democracia. Para cumplir con este objetivo los escritores, editores, y humoristas gráficos de *Por favor* enfatizaron que el cambio político requería un análisis crítico de los efectos de tres décadas de ideología franquista en las creencias personales y colectivas. Este artículo examina como los artículos de Maruja Torres, la primera escritora feminista que publica en *Por favor*, parodian la «prensa del corazón» para examinar el papel de los medios de comunicación en la difusión de la ideología nacionalcatólica y el sexismo. A través de una voz narrativa paródica y satírica, Torres presenta a una manera accesible las ideas feministas de los años setenta al público predominantemente masculino de *Por favor*.

<sup>1</sup> Haley O'Neil es profesora de Lengua y Literatura Españolas en la Universidad de Northern Iowa. Es doctora en Lenguas y Literaturas Hispánicas por la Universidad de California, Santa Bárbara. Su investigación se centra en el periodismo literario de la transición y la democracia en España. Ha publicado diversos artículos académicos y varias traducciones en la revista literaria *Quimera*.

KEYWORDS: periodismo literario, Maruja Torres, feminismo, parodia, transición.

In 1976, to celebrate the political satire magazine's one-hundredth issue, the editors of *Por favor* asked a number of Spanish writers, intellectuals, and politicians their opinions of the publication. Most applauded its snarky humor and biting political commentary, but Lidia Falcón, founder of the Partido Feminista de España and the transition-era feminist magazine *Vindicación Feminista*, seemed less impressed as she described «los rabos machista [sic], muy duros y muy claros que con cierta frecuencia aparecen en las páginas de la revista» («Encuesta» 21). *Por favor*, founded in 1974 by the authors Juan Marsé and Manuel Vázquez Montalbán along with the cartoonists Antonio Fraguas (Forges) and Jaume Perich, would not have struck most readers as fertile ground for discussing the complex issues of the women's liberation movement of the 1970s. The liberal magazine's penchant for including unrelated photographs of seminaked women (and occasionally men) with political articles, numerous advertisements for pornographic fiction, cover articles such as «Tetas Sí, Carrillo No,» and the fact that the magazine was run by, staffed by, and targeted to men hardly suggested a perspective critical of gender relations. In fact, the liberal press of the transition in general was unsympathetic to feminism and underreported, oversimplified, and misrepresented the women's movement (Radcliff, Larrondo Ureta). Despite the tensions between the transition-era press and feminists, magazines and newspapers still constituted a crucial space for feminist thinkers and writers to position women's rights as an essential piece of democratic reform.

In *Por favor* during the 1970s, articles published by the journalist Maruja Torres counterposed the *machista* tendencies of the magazine that Falcón describes. Her columns used humor and satire to introduce fundamental ideas of the women's liberation movement to an audience generally unfamiliar with its aims. In April 1974, with the first installment of her regular series «Esta semana Madame *Por favor* ha...», Torres became the first woman to write for the magazine. The series was a montage of doctored photos, farcical gossip columns, and an embittered personal diary that mimicked the *prensa del corazón*, the Spanish gossip press popularized during the dictatorship of Francisco Franco. The provocative and self-proclaimed feminist first-person narrative voice of «Esta semana Madame *Por favor* ha...» ridiculed the the common gossip-press image of women as caretakers devoted to their husbands, home, and children. And while its cartoonish images, celebrity caricatures, and tongue-in-cheek jokes may give Torres's column the appearance of having been a playful spoof of the gossip press, the series was just as politically charged as the rest of *Por favor*. I read Torres's series as a critical examination of the role of the media in propagating sexism and reproducing traditional family values rooted in National Catholicism, the fusion of Catholic doctrine and Falangist politics. In this article, I examine Torres's parodies of the

*prensa del corazón*, which interrogated the affinities between the gossip press and National Catholic ideologies while disarming feminist ideas for the predominantly male audience of *Por favor*.

*Por favor* was first released in 1974 under the auspices of the 1966 *Ley de Prensa e Imprenta*, which relaxed censorship laws while maintaining that the press should respect both «truth and morality» and «institutions and persons when making critical comments on political and administrative action» (Tusell 214). Under the revised law, the state reserved the right to impose sanctions and inspect and prevent publications deemed noncompliant with these ambiguous stipulations. It comes as no surprise that *Por favor* barely survived its four years of publication from 1974 to 1978, was repeatedly shut down—it was first suspended for four months in 1974 for publishing a cartoon of Jesus receiving the check at the Last Supper—and was not permitted to publish in the months preceding Franco's death (McDonough 130).<sup>2</sup> The magazine's first issue was released on the night of the assassination of Salvador Puig Antich, and from that moment, in cofounder Vázquez Montalbán's words, it existed on «el límite de lo permisivo» (14). According to Vázquez Montalbán, humor and satire were the subversive tools that the writers, cartoonists, and editors of magazine used in order to push the limits of acceptability under the 1966 law: «one could say things under the etiquette of humor that could not be said in any other language» (qtd. McDonough 129). Especially in the issues published during the twilight of Franco's life, *Por favor*'s contributors pushed the envelope, for example, by publishing «Diario apócrifo» scarred with the black marks of the censor; by featuring a cartoon of Franco with two microphones, one pointed to his mouth and the other to his backside; and by establishing its motto «El que avisa no es traidor»—all in 1974.

Despite the restrictive measures included in the 1966 Press Law, its passing opened the way for the print media of the late Franco years to introduce democracy and publicize democratic principles widely, making the new political ideals «both known and acceptable to ordinary Spaniards» (Tusell 214). The 1960s and early 1970s saw the release of more than one hundred new magazines and newspapers, including several humor periodicals that injected political criticism into Spanish public discourse. Along with *Por favor*, the political satire magazines *Papus* (1973-1986), *Hermano Lobo* (1972-1976), and *Muchas Gracias* (1974-1975)<sup>3</sup> appeared, often featuring many of the same authors and cartoonists. *Por favor*

<sup>2</sup> The editors of *Por favor* parody the closure of their magazine in the article «El día que nos comunicaron la suspensión de *Por favor*,» published in October 1974.

<sup>3</sup> These satire magazines were closely related: *Por favor* was created after disagreements among the editorial board of *Hermano Lobo*, *Muchas Gracias* was started during one of the closures of *Por favor*, and both Vázquez Montalbán and Torres published frequently in *Papus*.

stood out as one most influential and credible political satire magazines of the transition, not only for its respectable reach—it had a regular circulation of 30,000 to 40,000, with special editions reaching 80,000—but also for the well-established names of several members of its editorial board and for its interviews with high-profile politicians and authors of the transition (McDonough 130).<sup>4</sup> This is all in line with the founding mission of *Por favor*, which, according to Vázquez Montalbán, was to publish a humor magazine «de intervención política desde una mirada de izquierda plural aplicada hasta 1978 a empujar las condiciones que llevaban a la democracia y no sólo a la democracia política, sino la reivindicada libertad de conducta» («Prólogo» 16). In their study of the transition-era press, Ignacio Fontes and Manuel Ángel Menéndez note that *Por favor* was «el intento más redondo e ideológicamente más comprometido de la prensa de humor de la transición» (545). Even as it broadly critiqued the political transition, the magazine underscored the personal dimension of the shift from authoritarian rule to participatory democracy. Especially during its first two years of publication, *Por favor* emphasized that changes in women's rights would require both political reform and an examination of how individual and collective beliefs about gender had been shaped by almost forty years of official conservative ideologies.

Feminism and the emerging women's liberation movement in Spain were frequent subjects in *Por favor*, but they were treated with magazine's characteristic irony and satire. The article «No a la emancipación de la mujer,» published in April 1974 under one of Vázquez Montalbán's many pseudonyms, Baronesa D'Orcy, for example, encourages women to fool their husbands into abusing them so that they can stage a true revolution, «la extinción de ese horrible subgénero [*sic*] de gorilas exhibicionistas» (9). An issue published in February 1975, dedicated to the International Year of Women held that year in Mexico, included an article about how to pick up a feminist that carried the byline «Un Chimpancé Hembra.» Alongside the article appeared a cartoon of a contented Don Juan sitting in a salon full of women's heads mounted as taxidermy. Both the article and cartoon were condemned as offensive by the magazine's readers, forcing the editors to publish a response clarifying that they were not to be taken at face value and affirming that «creemos en la emancipación de la mujer en igual medida que creemos en la emancipación del proletariado y en la del chimpancé; sin que mujer, proletariado o chimpancé estén al mismo nivel de significación» («Aclaración»). The outcry, however, missed that the irony of both the article and cartoon was intended to rebuke unqualified critiques of feminism, not feminism itself.

<sup>4</sup> An example is the aforementioned survey for the hundredth issue that included comments from Jordi Pujol, Montserrat Roig, Antonio Buero Vallejo, Jaime Gil de Biedma, and Alfonso Guerra, among others.

Early on, the magazine brought on board several women writers and cartoonists: Torres began publishing «Esta semana Madame *Por Favor* ha...» in April 1974, Nuria Pompeia published several cartoons in early issues and began writing the column «Las mujeres objeto-ras» in December 1975, and Soledad Balaguer joined the magazine in 1976 with the series «Alicia en el país de las maravillas.» These articles touched on all issues related to the feminist movement, from birth control to equal pay to machismo. Torres's series—despite two name changes, first to «La novia de Reverte» and then «La ventana indiscreta,» the content and format of her series remained the same—parodied the gossip press to interrogate the ideological affinity between the Franco regime and the *prensa femenina*.<sup>5</sup> And her experience perfectly positioned her to level this critique. When Torres became the first woman to write for *Por favor* she was a little-known author who had previously worked for the celebrity magazines *Garbo* and *Fotogramas*. After she was taken on as a reporter for *El País* in the early 1980s, she would build a reputation as an intrepid war reporter and ruthless political critic, but, as she comments in her autobiography *Mujer en guerra*, as a woman journalist in the late years of the dictatorship she could only get jobs writing for the «páginas femeninas» about «maternidad, cocina, salud, belleza, y chismorreos» (73). Torres lampooned her own career as a gossip columnist<sup>6</sup> in «Esta semana Madame *Por Favor* ha...»—the title an allusion to the series «Estos días se habla de...» from the gossip magazine *Diez minutos*. The series imitates the style, content, and tone of the *prensa del corazón* to criticize the press's role in propagating the National Catholic rhetoric of femininity. In doing so, she (and *Por favor*) emphasized that women's liberation was as much a matter of unearthing the diffuse ways in which gender inequality has been instilled in Spanish culture as it was a series of legislative reforms.

Torres's articles in *Por favor* graphically parody the Spanish gossip press led by the successful *¡Hola!* magazine. Each installment is a collage of photos, cartoons, celebrity news snippets, reviews, mock advertisements, and diary entries, often bordered by little hearts and stars. The format clearly mimics the *prensa del corazón*, which to this day is easy to read, has brief texts, and favors illustrations and photographs (Bueno et al. 627). The layout of her series instantly distinguishes it from the rest of the magazine, deliberately satirizing the distinction between society news (for women) and political news (for men). Torres also reproduces the informal and intimate tone of the gossip press as she mockingly offers the latest beauty secrets and tips for caring for one's husband and children, dishes the latest celebrity gossip, and pines for the sexy men of the news. Her

<sup>5</sup> Juana Gallego Ayala uses the term *prensa femenina* to refer to press—including beauty, home, and gossip magazines—specifically targeted to women readers.

<sup>6</sup> Torres would continue to parody her career as a gossip columnist in the novel *¡Oh, es él! Viaje fantástico hacia Julio Iglesias* and in a series of columns published in *El País*, «Hogueras de agosto.»

ironic reproduction of the format and tone of the *prensa femenina* ridicules what Juana Gallego Ayala describes as the «discurso de lo privado» that reinforces the domestic and private role of women in society (22).

For Torres, the press for women was essentially an unofficial means of disseminating Francoist ideologies. During the dictatorship a considerable amount of media was targeted to women; the Sección Femenina—the women’s branch of the Falange, founded by Pilar Primo de Rivera—released several publications including the magazines *Teresa* and *Medina*, and in the 1940s several privately owned women’s gossip magazines appeared in Spain, including *Semana*, *¡Hola!*, and *Diez minutos* (Bueno et al. 626). While magazines published by the Sección Femenina represented the official voice of the regime and clearly sought to define women’s role in society in accordance with the principals of National Catholicism, privately published women’s magazines also functioned as what Louis Althusser defines as «ideological state apparatuses» (142). Private institutions, such as non-state publishing houses, act as extensions of the state when they disseminate the «ideology of the ruling class» that reinforces government power (144-49). Margaret E. W. Jones argues that during the Franco years the mass media, including women’s magazines, was able to «enculturate the feminine ideal» by «link[ing] the home to a wider network of normalizing discourses that included the image of the socially acceptable ‘good’ women» (315). Throughout the dictatorship, the *prensa del corazón*, along with other forms of media targeted to women, reproduced precepts of the Sección Femenina including women’s biological inferiority, the natural role of a woman as a mother and wife, and the inherent morality of the Spanish woman.

The close relationship between the gossip press and Francoist ideology is most evident in Spain’s most successful celebrity magazine, *¡Hola!*, first published in 1944 under the tight controls of censorship. Its founder, Antonio Sánchez Gómez, made explicit his support of the regime and often expressed his approval of the dictator in the pages of the magazine (Angeletti 344). *¡Hola!*’s coverage of royalties and celebrities reinforced the image of the «good woman» that Jones describes. A case in point is the editorial published on the last page of the first issue of the magazine: it warns women that if they were to lose their moral compass they «would be like men, but without their strength, ability, intelligence, and training. They would hardly be fit to meet with their limited biological obligations» (qtd. Angeletti 328). *¡Hola!*’s editorial board never waived in its commitment to the dictatorship and in 1975 dedicated a special issue to Franco’s death with the cover headline «Luto Nacional: El Caudillo ha muerto.» As a successful enterprise, *¡Hola!* was more influential and enduring than state-owned magazines: while *Medina* and *Teresa* had limited circulation and survived only the first decades of the dictatorship, *¡Hola!*, had a circulation of 200,000 within a decade

of its release, continued to grow in popularity and scope during the 1950s and 1960s, and in 1972 had its first run of one million copies when it covered the wedding of Franco's granddaughter Carmen Martínez-Bordiú y Franco (Angeletti 326-46). Thus, even as the power of the Franco regime began to wane, *¡Hola!*, an ideological state apparatus, reached an increasingly large segment of the Spanish population.

Even in the *apertura* years of the dictatorship, and despite significant changes that waves of foreign tourists brought to Spain in the 1960s, the state continued to celebrate domesticity and position motherhood as a woman's duty to her country-traditional Catholic family values that Torres's parodies interrogated (Morcillo 152). Torres's articles in *Por favor* rendered absurd the exaltation of marriage and motherhood in the gossip press, thereby ridiculing the continued allegiance to National Catholic ideals of magazines such as *¡Hola!*. Several installments of «Esta semana Madame *Por favor* ha...» specifically targeted the portrayal of a woman's natural role as a mother and wife, and marriage and childbearing as the fullest expression of the Spanish good woman. On April 15, 1974, in the chronicle of her week, for example, she comments that she has found the perfect store for upcoming wedding registries. Among the items the store offers are «una docena de 'Eres tan guarra como tu madre,' 'una docena de 'Lo que pasa es que tú eres un inútil y un fracasado,» and «[s]iete pares de 'Estás poniéndote como una vaca' y 'A ver cuando te mueres de una vez.'» In an earlier article, from April 1, she recommends that her readers consider purchasing a newly developed «marido-objeto,» useful for the times when a woman might want a husband, as she puts it, «el coito semanal, etcétera» (28). She also has advice for soon-to-be and future mothers, giving them step-by-step instructions: «en cuanto le venga el hijo al mundo lo envuelve cuidadosamente en papel de estaño, le practica una rajita en la parte superior, que rellenará con abundante mantequilla lo mete en el horno y le deja todo el tiempo que le venga en gana» («Nacer»). A photo of a crying baby being wrapped in tinfoil by a pair of hands accompanies the snippet. Torres's advice imitates the friendly and intimate tone of the press for women, but she adds to it an ironic and crass sense of humor that itself departs from norms of femininity. Her articles were thereby able to subvert the social order represented in magazines for women—a hegemonic structure in which marriage and motherhood are women's ultimate aspirations—as a way of calling into question the role of the press in maintaining inequalities.

This critical perspective toward the role of the press in disseminating models of femininity echoes ideas of second-wave feminism and especially the work of Betty Friedan. Second-wave feminism influenced the burgeoning women's movement in late-Francoist Spain and translations of both Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* and Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* were published in the 1960s.

Friedan's watershed text attributes the pervasiveness of the myth of the domestic woman to women's magazines that portray women as «young and frivolous, almost childlike; fluffy and feminine, passive; gaily content in a world of bedroom and kitchen, sex, babies and home.» In so doing, they reinforce what she calls the feminine mystique, the rooting of a woman's identity in a «mysterious and intuitive» nature that finds its fullest expression in the housewife-mother (32). Bringing this type of feminist critique to *Por favor's* mostly male audience—who, in the last years of the dictatorship, would have had little exposure to these fundamental premises of women's liberation—wouldn't have been effective if done in the dry, indignant tone adopted by many feminist outlets at the time. Torres bridged that divide through humor.

Rather than somberly critiquing the negative portrayal of feminism by the Spanish press, Torres employs what Linda Hutcheon labels oppositional irony, irony that reproduces the language of a particular discourse to ridicule and correct it. This type of irony, argues Hutcheon, is counter-discursive because it contests «dominant habits of mind and expression» (45). Torres ironically appropriates the mass media's hostility toward feminism to expose as absurd the fear of women's liberation that it fosters. In one entry in «Esta semana Madame *Por favor* ha...» from April 22, 1974, for example, Torres's narrative voice warns Spanish women of the devastating effects of birth control pills, using a German woman as a case in point. She explains that the physical changes that come when a woman becomes «un organismo corroído por las degradadas costumbres» include uncontrollable growth of «el vello en bigote, sobaquillos y demás.» She then continues to list the even more nefarious effects; the German woman has also «perdido las orejas y la lengua» as a result of the «terribles consecuencias de la píldora.» The excessive effects of birth control that Torres describes ridicules the press for propagating unfounded fears of the women's liberation movement while suggesting that Spanish women should enjoy the same rights as their Northern European counterparts. The short article «A dónde vamos a parar» from March 1975 takes a similarly ironic narrative voice that reports on the news that a Spanish woman has for the first time scaled the face of the Naranjo de Bulnes peak. After her initial pride, Torres's narrative voice comments that to accomplish the feat the woman had to spend three nights sleeping on the cliff face in the company of three male assistant climbers, making the narrative voice «presa de indecible angustia y de santo temor por la salvaguarda de las buenas costumbres,» and causing her to wonder, «¿estaba por lo menos la escaladora casada con los tres? Porque si no, no sé dónde vamos a ir a parar.» In parodying the fear that changes in women's rights will result in the moral degradation of Spanish women, «A dónde vamos a parar» exposes how such hostility toward feminism relies on traditional Catholic values largely obsolete in transition-era Spain.



In fact, in many installments of «Esta semana Madame *Por favor* ha...» Torres ironically adopted the voice of the popular press to celebrate the Spanish «good woman» and to warn against feminism's potentially amoralizing effects on Spanish society. In this way the series reflected the second-wave charge that the media largely portrayed changes in women's rights as undermining harmonious gender relations. According to Friedan, feminism was depicted in women's magazines as «leading to the masculinization of women with enormously dangerous consequences to the home... and to the ability of the woman, as well as her husband, to obtain sexual gratification» (37). The press of transition-era Spain was even more hostile to women's liberation and often characterized feminists as selfish women who pitted themselves against men and cared little about the common good of their families and country (Radcliff 62-64).

The most audacious part of Torres's series was the feature «Es mi hombre» in which a photograph of a well-known man—most often a political or military figure—is followed by love letter signed by Torres. Among the men featured in «Es mi hombre» are Idi Amin, the infamously violent and corrupt president of Uganda in the 1970s; Laureano López Rodo, minister of foreign affairs under Franco; Haile Selassie, emperor of Ethiopia from 1930 to 1974; and José López Rega, the Perón governments' minister of social welfare who organized the 1973 Ezeiza massacre. Praising public figures as objects of adoration was a defining posture of the gossip press; Torres turns that upside down, calling attention to the gossip press's relegation of women's interests to the private domain, which reduces the political figures actively shaping their realities to nothing more than sexy men. Women's potential participation in public discourse was curtailed by a press that domesticated women and consigned them to the private sphere.

In «Es mi hombre» Torres hardly admires the controversial figures to whom she dedicates her letters. In her letter to Idi Amin, published in July 1975, her polite «Querido Amin» is followed by diatribe expressing absolute disgust: «Eres un cerdo. Ya sé que no eres el único, ni el más cercano a mí en el mapa... lo que me disgusta profundamente en ti es que, siendo un puerco tan espectacular, te hayas convertido en «el más malo», el menos civilizado, el más caprichoso y egocéntrico de los autócratas.» She takes it a step further in her letter to José López Rega from August 1975 in which, after noting that he is diabetic, gives him the following instructions:

Se toman tres tocinillos de cielo y media docena de trufas, se aplastan junto con medio kilo de azúcar y un par de cucharadas de rica miel, se remueve bien la pasta hasta que esté bien homogénea, se le añaden entonces ochocientos mil torrijas pasadas por el túrmix y a continuación veinte mil litros de jarabe de grosella, se bate todo muy bien y cuando se haya logrado una pasta consistente

aunque ligera se la vierte en recipiente de crocante [*sic*] con adorno de chantilly. Se come sin parar hasta perder el habla, el acento porteño, la mesa para convocar espíritus, después la salud y después quién sabe si también la vida.

These articles oppose certain tenets of the gossip press: never offer judgment, discuss politics, or criticize public figures. Instead, Torres's pointed, impassioned narrative voice went as far as wishing death upon corrupt politicians. In so doing, she challenged the assumption that women only want to read articles about love, family, and the home that are written in a friendly, intimate tone. Moreover, her columns called into question the gossip press's celebration of public figures on the charge that it dissuades a discussion of their politics. Taking into account the «Es mi hombre» articles were published during the final years of the dictatorship, they introduce into public discourse a direct condemnation of authoritarian politics that certainly resonates with Spain's own dictatorial regime.

When considered as a whole, the articles published in «Esta semana Madame *Por favor* ha...» underscore that changing women's rights in democratic Spain was as much a process of examining discursive reproduction of gender inequalities as it was a process of political reform. In her parodies, Torres probed how one branch of the media—the *prensa del corazón*—replicated rhetoric rooted in traditional Catholic ideology although not an official voice of the state. Torres's articles also subtly acquainted her readers with several of the primary objectives of second-wave feminism and thereby participated in the process of familiarizing the Spanish reading public with democratic values. «Esta semana Madame *Por favor* ha...» thus advanced the larger role of *Por favor* in, as Vázquez Montalbán described, «normalizing many values, criticizing others» during the earliest stages of the transition (qtd. McDonough 129).

By way of her ironic, playful, and sometimes crass sense of humor, Torres made feminist ideas accessible to a reading public that was largely alienated from the women's liberation movement. The general Spanish public during the transition showed little support for feminism, in part due to the media that, as Pamela Radcliff comments, portrayed feminists as «fuera de lo normal, egoístas, divisionistas... duras, furiosas, intimidantes; una voz estridente y poco bienvenida en un mar de urbanidad» (62). Feminist magazines, especially *Vindicación Feminista*, further distanced many people from feminism by using what Jones describes as a «radical tone... a call to arms» that «made many people, who should have been sympathetic, uncomfortable and consequently hostile to its aims» (331). As an alternative to a radical or threatening tone, humor became Torres's implement, and she thereby avoided falling into the stereotypical image of feminists fostered by the press. In «The Seriously Erotic Politics of Feminist Laughter,» Cynthia Willet, Julie Willet, and Yael D. Sherman argue that feminist humor maintains the demo-

cratic and progressive aims of the movement, but without the «schoolmarmish demeanor» so often associated with feminist critics (22-30). Torres's short, witty, and lively articles were effective in conveying a feminist critique without overburdening her readers. In favoring parody and satire over candor and gravity, «Esta semana Madame *Por favor* ha...» offers an easier starting point for its readers to approach the drastic societal and political changes proposed by the feminist movement. The humor of Torres's work, in Hutcheon's terms, disarms feminist discourse and «offers access to material that is not, in fact, very funny at all» (25).

By making feminist discourse palatable to a more mainstream, more male audience, Torres's articles in *Por favor* forged another mode of creating the sense of community so essential to the feminist movement of the transition. While *Vindicación Feminista* and similar feminist magazines gave shape to communities of women—Falcón's introductory essay uses the feminine form to refer to both the women writers (*nosotras*) and readers (*las lectoras*) of the magazine—Torres's articles in *Por favor* spoke to a different public, quite simply, one made of up both women and men. Her parodies of the gossip press published in a magazine mostly read by men questioned how gender inequality is maintained without moralizing or accusing her readers. Willet, Willet, and Sherman credit feminist humor with the potential to form communities «not based on homogeneity or rigid identities» but that are the result of the «intersubjectivity—of laughing together.» The moment of laughter, they argue, can allow for people of different groups to temporarily identify with one and another and, in this way, effect social change (229). Even though feminist humor such as Torres's *Por favor* corpus radically subverts social norms, it does so in an enjoyable, pleasurable way that invites in readers of diverse identities. In the last years of the Franco dictatorship, Torres's parodies in *Por favor* urged her readers to set aside their assumed positions on feminism and consider how it fits in with the with the progressive aims of the nascent democracy.

The dissonance between the feminist perspective of «Esta semana Madame *Por favor* ha...» and the machismo that Falcón sees in the magazine underscores the complexities facing feminist authors publishing after nearly forty years of Francoist sexist and discriminatory politics and rhetoric. In a cultural landscape in which nudity was a novelty and feminists were considered antagonists, explicit feminist critique had no natural audience, no public groomed to accept it. And while the critical discussion about the relationship between feminism and the press has focused on the tensions between the two, Torres's articles in *Por favor* offer an example of a feminist author challenging—in the pages of the press—the mass media's problematic portrayal of feminism. In «Esta semana Madame *Por favor* ha...» Torres invited all readers to laugh with her about the absurd depiction of women by the gossip press and, in so doing, offered a point of access

into the discussion of how gender inequality is created and maintained. Torres's biting satire allowed her to traverse the rocky road between feminism and the transition-era press to show to all of *Por favor's* readers that women's liberation was a movement that they could and should support. As a sarcastic ambassador of second-wave feminism, Torres took on the very serious task of promoting a more just and egalitarian society in post-Franco Spain.

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