

## **The Rewards of Female Fascism in Franco's New State: the *Recompensas Y* of the Sección Femenina de la Falange, 1939-1945\***

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'La condecoración elegida es muy bonita ya que debido a las nuevas instrucciones del Reglamento de Recompensas, ha podido hacerse en metal y esmalte, su precio es de 90 ptas'.<sup>1</sup> Written by the head of the Sección Femenina's Asesoría Jurídica section, this brief description of the *Recompensas 'Y'* (the decorations awarded to the Sección Femenina (SF) members for their work before and during the Civil War, and named, with ostentatiously archaic orthography, for Ysabel la Católica) indicates much about the position of the Sección Femenina in the immediately post-War period. Part of the apparatus of medals and insignia in the New State's politics of reward, the *Recompensas Y* spoke to the militarized dimensions of Falangist women's activities in pre-war political life, and in front-line and rearguard positions during the war; the emphasis on their prettiness (the highest awards took the form of a brooch, to be worn on the breast of the uniform) signals the concern that the women's service not be seen as undermining traditional feminine values or affinities, particularly given that Franco's gender politics were yet more conservative than the Falange's founder, José Antonio Primo de Rivera. As the extract above also indicates, women were expected to fund their

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<sup>1</sup> Real Academia de Historia (hereafter RAH), Archivo Documental de la Asociación Nueva Andadura (hereafter ADANA), Serie Azul, Carpeta 16, Document 17, 09.03.1942. Where documents are dated, the date is provided at the first citation only.

own awards.<sup>2</sup> This fact epitomized a broader dynamic: although the SF played a crucial role in the stabilisation of the new regime, much of its work continued to be unsalaried or under-remunerated. Although central to the functioning of the New State, fascist women were expected, in effect, to pay for the privilege.

The 'Y' awards have received little historical attention: Kathleen Richmond incisively inscribes them within the SF's efforts to construct a set of rituals and icons commensurate with its post-1939 status as a state organ, rather than minority party.<sup>3</sup> Yet the awards are of interest and value beyond these undoubtedly important binding ceremonial functions: the application documentation they entailed allows a very rare glimpse of early self-representation by SF members.<sup>4</sup> This article will argue that the 'Y' award documentation gives a greater sense of the diversity of early female Falangists' lived experience than hitherto available, and adds to our understanding of the pre-war SF (an underexamined period in histories of the institution to date). Further, the documentation allows us to explore the significance of the 1937 Unification of

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<sup>2</sup> The expense of the decoration speaks to the comfortable economic status of many SF members: 90 ptas was a considerable sum at the time -- in 1942, a copy of *ABC* newspaper cost 25 céntimos; a large loaf of bread less than 1pta. Nevertheless, at least one member claiming hardship was permitted to pay by instalment: RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 16, Doc. 2, 08.10.42.

<sup>3</sup> *Women and Spanish Fascism: the Women's Section of the Falange 1934-1959* (London, Routledge, 2003), 40.

<sup>4</sup> In the early post-war years, there was an almost complete absence of accounts of first-hand experience by members who did not occupy the highest reaches of the Delegación Nacional in the material published by the SF. This is true even of the most divulgative and innocuous material. For example, in the organization's mass-market magazines, *Medina* and *Revista Y*, the various *consultorios* — specialized regular advice columns (on matters as diverse as marriage, graphology and even beekeeping) in which readers' concerns or queries were addressed, would never include the reader's letter itself — only the answer, from which the question could be inferred, along with the reader's initials and place of residence. And there is little detailed chronicling of members' pre-war or wartime experience in any of the SF publications, either from a first-hand perspective or otherwise. The only sustained account of the SF's activities from its formation in 1934 is the serialized 'Historia de la Sección Feminina' written by the organization's leader, Pilar Primo de Rivera and published in the *Revista Y* in fifteen instalments between March 1938 and May 1939. Towards the end of the history, there is incorporation of brief accounts by other members of the organization in different areas of Nationalist territory, but it is a highly controlled and limited plurality: there are no more than 4 such accounts, and all are by very senior regional leaders, at least one of whom, Angela Ridruejo, was a longstanding friend of Pilar Primo de Rivera. Their accounts are entirely consonant with Primo's, and add little discursive variety or substantive difference of perspective. The overwhelming characteristic not just of this history, but of the representation of SF experience as a whole in its official discourse during the first decade of its existence is a striking univocity, partly a function of its dominance by a small number of tightly inter-connected senior women.

Nationalist forces under Franco in terms of gender history and the impact it had on SF members' lives rather than in terms of high politics, which has been the prevailing optic so far, even in institutional histories drawing on oral sources. It also allows us to nuance -- and in places constructively problematize -- the at times rather homogeneous, defensive self-representations appearing in the most recent histories of the organization.<sup>5</sup>

A little under 6,000 *Recompensas Y* were awarded between 1939 and 1945,<sup>6</sup> with more than 3,000 awarded in 1939 and 1940.<sup>7</sup> There were three categories: the highest award was the *Y de oro*, followed by *Y de plata* and then the *Y de rojo*.<sup>8</sup> A special

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<sup>5</sup> This is not to denigrate such studies, which have been valuably reflexive and insightful about the limitations of their sources. The first histories of the SF to draw substantively on oral testimony did not begin to appear until the late 1990s, at least twenty years after the organization had been dissolved by the new democratic state. The cadre of available interviewees was relatively small, and was composed largely of by then elderly women who had occupied senior positions in the organization over many years. They were an intensely loyal and not uncommonly defensive group, largely already known to each other. Many were accessed via the SF's civil-association successor, the Asociación Nueva Andadura (ANA), which, as Kathleen Richmond notes, exercised careful control of encounters with researchers. In addition, ANA had by this time recently published its own history of the organization—the *Crónica de la Sección Femenina y su tiempo*, and Inbal Ofer speculates that this collective project to reconstruct and preserve a particular, revindicative version of the organization's past 'unified' the personal memories of the members concerned. She notes that her interviewees expressed a strong desire to tell the SF's story 'in their own words' but also notes that "'their own words" bore a suspicious resemblance to the "official version" [the *Crónica*]. See Richmond, *Women and Spanish Fascism*, 129-135; Inbal Ofer, *Señoritas in Blue: the Making of a Female Political Elite in Franco's Spain* (Brighton: Sussex Academic Press, 2009) 8-10. See also the highly valuable discussion in Inmaculada Blasco Herranz, *Armas femeninas para la contrarrevolución: la Sección Femenina en Aragón 1936-1950* (Málaga, Universidad de Málaga: 1999), 16-19. The *Crónica de la Sección Femenina y su tiempo* (Madrid: Asociación de Nueva Andadura, 1992) was written collectively by former SF members under the direction of historian Luis Suárez Fernández.

<sup>6</sup> The period explored in this study begins with the year in which the 'Y' awards were first instituted (1939), and ends when the last substantial number of awards recognising pre-war or wartime service was made (1945). 'Y' awards continued to be granted for exceptional service to the organization until the early 1970s.

<sup>7</sup> At the end of the war total SF membership was estimated to have been approximately 580,000 (from a pre-war 1936 figure of around 2,500, and an estimated size in 1937 of 60,000) (M<sup>a</sup> Teresa Gallego Méndez, *Mujer, Falange, Franquismo* [Madrid: Taurus, 1983, 47, 73]. The actual number of women receiving a decoration between 1939 and 1945 was much higher than 6,000, as the majority of 'Y' awards were collective, granted, for example, to a wartime laundry or nursing unit, which not uncommonly contained at least several dozen members, each of whom, if she fulfilled the length-of-service requirements, was then eligible to apply to be included in the award and so to receive her individual insignia. In the case of the collective awards, these were cloth badges to be sewn onto the members' uniforms rather than the more elegant enamelled brooches described by the head of the Asesoría Jurídica above. Nevertheless, members were still expected to pay for them (in this case 6 ptas rather than 90).

<sup>8</sup> The original statutes set out the following criteria for the awards of an Y de oro and Y de plata thus:

individual *Y de fundadora*, awarded for distinguished service by *camisas viejas* -- women who had joined the Sección Femenina of the Falange before 18 July 1936 -- was later added to this list. The application process demanded that women seeking an individual (as opposed to collective) decoration submit a sworn account of the activities that gave them grounds for an award. Candidates were instructed to:

Relacionar con el mayor detalle los cargos que han desempeñado, los servicios prestados, las condecoraciones y recompensas que ostente, las sanciones que haya sufrido y cuantas otras condiciones favorables o adversas concurren en ella [...] Relatar minuciosamente el hecho o hechos que la distingan de manera excepcional o extraordinaria y motiven la propuesta.<sup>9</sup>

Individual applications were accompanied by at least one reference written by a member of the local SF hierarchy, whose approval was a pre-requisite for award.<sup>10</sup> A significant number of the accounts -- and the references -- exceeded their remit, discussing more general aspects of the members' experiences of the pre-war and wartime SF. Some contain a strongly affective element, recounting (explicitly or obliquely) political and personal aspirations and disappointments or suffering. The

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'Se concedera la "Y" bordada en oro, cuando por iniciativa personal se haya realizado un hecho, con sacrificio y alegría extraordinariamente demostrativo el elevado concepto que se tiene de la Patria y sea tendente a producir un relevante beneficio, para que así sirva de ejemplo a todos y de exponente ante la Historia del heroísmo racial de la mujer española.[...]

Se concedera la "Y" bordada en plata:

A) cuando la afiliada sin estar comprendida en el artículo anterior, se demuestre plenamente que ha realizado un hecho singular, revelador del más alto concepto de la Patria y de la Falange.

B) Cuando por la realización de un servicio ordenado por las Jerarquías del Partido su hubiese sufrido prisión antes y durante el Movimiento, sin haber decaído el espíritu ni haber realizado hecho alguno que comprometiese el honor de la Organización.

C) Cuando en función de un arriesgado servicio activo, ordenado por las Jerarquías de la Organización se encontrase la muerte.

D) En idéntico caso que el apartado precedente, cuando se sufriesen heridas graves, y durante la curación se continuase acreditando un excepcional espíritu y fe en la Falange.'

The statutes were amended in 1942, mostly notably removing the categories of death and serious injury as eligibility criteria: it seems that the SF had overestimated the extent of personal injury to its members during wartime service. See RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 7, Doc. 1, 01.05.1939, and Carpeta 8, Doc. 3, 09.03.1942. Throughout this study, now-archaic accentuation norms, as well as typographical errors, syntactical, accentuation and spelling mistakes have been left unaltered as long as they do not impede comprehension; any necessary alterations are indicated in square brackets.

<sup>9</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 8, Doc. 3.

<sup>10</sup> Absent such a senior SF member, a senior male Falange member would not uncommonly write the report.

documentation contains, then, a corpus of immediately post-war narrative recollections of self, and of lived pre-war and wartime experience and service to the SF.

Of course the specific purpose and discursive framework of these early testimonies cannot be underplayed: at stake was an insignia conferring considerable political capital and in some cases professional preferment on its bearer -- a useful asset in the highly repressive and economically difficult early 1940s.<sup>11</sup> While the accounts contained in these documents are hardly disinterested, they are not necessarily any *more* interested than the guarded testimonies produced for the much later oral-history approaches to the organization, though certainly *differently* so.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the expectation that women reflect on and emphasize their individual achievements is in some ways helpful for study of the experience of early members: it militates against the self-abnegation or effacement encouraged in some Falangist and SF discourses, and allows us to explore the possibilities and limits of expression of members' agency and initiative. And even if some women over-emphasize or exaggerate their contribution, their accounts remain of interest for what they might tell us about what women anticipated would be valued by the awards committee.

On the most basic level, one aspect of the value of the early 'Y' individual award applications and their references is the sheer heterogeneity of their content and style: they range from fine-grained, astute analysis of Catalan politics on the right and how Catalanist sympathies vitiated Falangist adherence even amongst SF members<sup>13</sup> through a boastful account of how one intrepid member mugged an unwitting

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<sup>11</sup> Although an award did not entail state benefits and employment privileges in way that the status of *ex-combatiente* did, article 15 of the amended statutes lays out that it brought with it 'La preferencia para cumplir servicios de elección o de confianza y desempeñar cargos de la SF' (RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 8, Doc. 2, 27.10.1939)

<sup>12</sup> See footnote 5.

<sup>13</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 16, Doc. 4, 19.09.1941.

Republican soldier in a wartime Madrid for his identity papers,<sup>14</sup> through accounts noting the disapproval or ridicule that early members faced from members of their community,<sup>15</sup> indirect criticisms of the organization<sup>16</sup>, self-dramatising narratives of derring-do deploying the literary strategies of an adventure story<sup>17</sup>, accounts suggesting unfamiliarity with formal writing or low educational levels<sup>18</sup> to coolly precise and confident, tightly-structured reports by university-educated members.<sup>19</sup> Aside from the pro-forma perfunctory copied applications (usually for collective awards), and in contrast to later recollections, there is striking diversity in these accounts.

At the same time, certain patterns emerge and common concerns are discernible. Of particular interest is material that might shed light on the areas that the *altos mandos* interviewed from the late 1980s onwards were perhaps less interested in, found uncomfortable, or were less able to speak to. These areas included how members represented both leaving the home, the traditionally primary female domain for the middle-class Right, to enter public space and take on new responsibilities as SF activists, and then, in certain cases, how the return to home was negotiated in light of Pilar Primo de Rivera's 'Circular 99' in June 1938, removing married members or widowed members with children from leadership positions.<sup>20</sup> Other areas included how early members wrote about their family obligations, and what they had to say about combining them with SF commitments; how members and their referees modelled

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<sup>14</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 12, Doc. 253, 16.08.1939.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 16, Doc 12, 03.05.1939, where a referee writes of a candidate: 'la lucha fue doble: por un lado la persecución de los socialistas, y por otro la frialdad o el miedo que todos tenían, presionados por las amenazas marxistas unos, y porque otros miraban a la Falange como cosa de chicos o de locos'.

<sup>16</sup> Some of these are studied in detail below.

<sup>17</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 16, Doc. 17, 22.08.1940.

<sup>18</sup> Some applications contain simple spelling or syntactical mistakes; others are unable to maintain a formal third-person perspective, lapsing into and out of first-person narration.

<sup>19</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 16, Doc. 20, 01.05.1941.

<sup>20</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 57. 24.06.1938.

gender-appropriate or out-role behaviours and identities in relation to political activism; and how disillusion, disappointment and even dissent might have been expressed in the difficult discursive conditions of an award application. It is these areas that this article will particularly focus on, exploring how they might add to the existing studies.

Since SF historiography took its own (late) discursive turn, scholars have shown greater awareness that the protests of female submission and subordination in SF members' writings are evidence less of the internalisation of traditionalist views about women's proper place and capacities than of the deployment of subalternist tactics, used in various ways to justify members' public activism.<sup>21</sup> The discourse studied so far has been published speeches and manuals by a small number of experienced, very senior members of the SF hierarchy. The 'Y' award applications reveal a slightly more complex picture. 'Y' award applicants, and most notably the younger, university-educated members, were certainly ostentatiously circumspect when describing activities that involved entering the formal political sphere, encroached on what applicants perceived as male territory, or were otherwise out-role in gender terms. Their most common choice of discursive tactic at such moments involved what might be termed 'licensed agency'. Its use is worth examining in a little detail, not just because discourse analysis tells us something about how these women negotiated their new roles and powers, but because what they write also paints a picture of the pre-war Falange's attitude to female activism that has not so far appeared in histories of the movement.

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<sup>21</sup> See Jo Labanyi, 'Resemanticizing Feminine Surrender: Cross-Gender Identifications in the Writings of Spanish Female Fascist Activists', in *Women's Narrative and Fiction in Twentieth-Century Spain*, ed. Ofelia Ferrán and Kathleen M. Glenn (New York & London: Routledge, 2002), 75-94; Nino Kebazde, 'The Right to be Selfless and Other Prerogatives of the Weak in the Rhetoric of Sección Femenina', *Romance Quarterly*, 55:2 (2008), 109-127.

Careful not to present themselves as seeking, let alone vying for positions of inappropriate power, members' accounts instead stress reticent acceptance of such roles, and only at the behest of their male comrades. For example, Justina Rodríguez Viguri, at the time a member of the Sindicato Español Universitario (SEU) -- the Falangist student union) -- spends a not insignificant part of her report describing in some detail her reluctance to attend an SEU Consejo Nacional:

Yo en contra de lo que opinaba [el presidente del SEU], me resistía [...] alegando que nuestro puesto en la Organización no podía llegar más allá que la ayuda en la Facultad y que mi asistencia [...] representaba la entrada de la mujer en los campos políticos de la Organización.<sup>22</sup>

She is persuaded to take part only through the direct intervention of José Antonio Primo de Rivera, who instructs her that it is he who will decide her mission within the organization. In the Consejo, together with her comrade Mercedes Fórmica, she is assigned to further political roles for the subsequent academic year. She notes 'Nosotras no quisimos aceptar pero Salazar nos obligó prometiéndome lo consultaría con el J[e]f[e] N[acional]'.<sup>23</sup> A Valladolid member, Rosario Pereda, who volunteered her services for the JONS<sup>24</sup> in 1932, also flourishes once she is licensed to do so by her male superiors. The long reference accompanying her application describes, apparently verbatim, the young woman's initial encounter with the JONS leader, Onésimo Redondo, who greets her proposal to participate thus:

--Agradezco y acepto tu ofrecimiento, ya te avisaremos para que vengas a barrer y limpiar esto un poco....¿Te llamas?

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<sup>22</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 16, Doc 20, undated. Where members' names are already in the public domain (because they are well known through other studies of the SF, or because they appear in, or have themselves written, memoirs or biographies), this study has referenced them; the anonymity of all other members has been preserved.

<sup>23</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 16, Doc. 20. And indeed the initiative for which Viguri is best known — becoming the first female member of the SEU by enrolling under the name of Justino Viguri -- was an act of audacity undertaken with the encouragement and co-operation of senior male members. This anecdote has been reproduced by Falange and SF members in several places; Viguri tells the story herself in her application.

<sup>24</sup> The fascist JONS party (Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista) merged with the Falange in 1934.

--Rosario Pereda, responde la muchachita con voz feble por la desilusión.<sup>25</sup>

For the referee, there is a gentle corrective lesson to this story as well as a happy ending: quickly realising Pereda's qualities as a propagandist and orator, Redondo soon co-opts her for the election campaign of 1933, and she joins her male comrades in a public political role, gaining a reputation as a 'infatigable, impulsiva y batalladora nacional-sindicalista'.<sup>26</sup> A slightly different, but not unrelated dynamic is visible in the account of Carmen García del Salto, a member of the Jerez de la Frontera branch. In this case, she presents her political intervention at a crucial moment not as an explicitly licensed agency, but as one of last resort: absent all her male comrades (because imprisoned, hospitalized or away), she alone was responsible for mobilizing the Falange on 18 July 1936 against popular resistance to the incipient military rebellion.<sup>27</sup>

Sufficiently authoritative male permission secured (or unavailable, in García del Salto's case), the members are discreetly keen to emphasize that they are equal to the tasks that fall to them. Mercedes Fórmica provides a magisterial example of how the presentation of individual initiative and merit may be appropriately veiled by the sanction of male authority:

me encargaron de redactar una Ponencia sobre la actuación de la SF en la Universidad, Ponencia que fue aprobada.

Como Jefe Nacional del SEU fui miembro de la Junta Consultiva del SEU.

(Hago mención de estos cargos no para significar una importancia Jerárquica, sino para realzar una mayor responsabilidad. Ya que en aquellos tiempos a mayor Jerarquía, mayor persecución política).

Esta Jefatura no me impidió seguir trabajando en SF del Partido como una camarada más, y en la Universidad siguiendo los deseos de José

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<sup>25</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 17, Doc. 32. Date not recorded.

<sup>26</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 17, Doc. 32.

<sup>27</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 16, Doc. 8, 11.03.1940

Antonio expresados varias veces a través de aquel primer Consejo procuramos dejar bien a la Falange obteniendo de las Cátedras socialistas las máximas calificaciones.<sup>28</sup>

Particularly deft is the way that, disavowing her own authority, she converts her status as female political subject into that of persecuted object, no different from her male and female comrades.

Viguri also skilfully balances the presentation of individual achievement with obedience to male instructions. She records that she was promoted to the leadership of the Sección Femenina of the SEU (the Falange student union), noting that this appointment was made not with

el exclusivo fin de dirigir los grupos de estudiantes mujeres [...] sino con el objetivo de si era necesario tener la suficiente autoridad para poder sustituir accidentalmente a camaradas que por estar en la cárcel o perseguidos no pudieran desempeñarlo directamente.<sup>29</sup>

This is clearly no token role, even if it is a substitutory one. Viguri also records the commendation she received from her male superiors for her (unspecified) behaviour during an incident at Madrid University in which an SEU member was accused of shooting a porter. She is particularly eager to indicate her fortitude and sang-froid in this incident: 'La afiliada que me acompañó a este servicio pidió la baja por el temor que le inspiraba la violencia'.<sup>30</sup> Viguri's report also indicates that, at the end of 1935, the SEU National Council informed female delegates that from that point on

no había inconveniente en que desempeñaran los servicios violentos que creyeran necesarios aunque hasta ese momento—por regla general—siempre se había procurado [n]o dárselos a ellas.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 16, Doc. 20.

<sup>29</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 16, Doc. 20.

<sup>30</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 16, Doc. 20. Viguri does not specify what these 'servicios violentos' were.

<sup>31</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 16, Doc. 20.

We note, too, the astuteness with which Viguri underlines both her leadership skills and her robustness when she writes:

debido a mi mayor contacto con los Mandos Nacionales del SEU y pertenecer a la Jefatura, siguiendo su ejemplo siempre era yo la que desempeñaba los servicios mas duros [...]<sup>32</sup>

And even as she qualifies her role in initiating the Falangist uprising as an agency of last resort, García del Salto is careful to record that '[d]icha orden lo dí bajo mi absoluta responsabilidad'(and her order was apparently accepted without hesitation by her male comrades).<sup>33</sup> In some ways, then, such accounts are models of skilful rhetoric and self-positioning: these members present themselves as at once highly competent leaders and utterly unthreatening subordinates, always reliant on male permission for their accomplishments.

If the licensed agency described here were merely a discursive tactic, these accounts would be of interest primarily insofar as they showed that the use of what Jo Labanyi has referred to as 'good Gramscian subalternist practice' in SF writings was not confined to a tiny number of highly elite members.<sup>34</sup> But licensed agency is clearly not *just* a rhetorical ploy: the members were recounting verifiable exchanges and relations with their male superiors. And none of the actions described or roles conferred here take place in the exceptional circumstances of war, but beforehand (at its outbreak in García del Salto's case), suggesting that they were, if not routine, then not wholly extraordinary either.<sup>35</sup> What the reports suggest, then, and what has not hitherto received historiographical attention, is that there was significant diversity and leeway

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<sup>32</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 16, Doc. 20.

<sup>33</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 16, Doc. 8.

<sup>34</sup> Labanyi, 'Resemanticizing Feminine Surrender', 88.

<sup>35</sup> All the events described in Viguri's application end before July 1936; the leadership responsibilities described by Fórmica are all conferred on her before the war; Rosario Pereda's campaigning oratory takes place for the 1933 elections.

in the way that pre-war Spanish fascism negotiated the possibilities and limits of acceptable roles for women, both in terms of their formal politics, and the dirtier tasks that supplemented those politics. While Pilar Primo de Rivera was writing to a new member in 1935 that the SF's mission consisted of 'labor completamente femenina'<sup>36</sup>, Justina Viguri's superiors in the SEU were at exactly the same moment bracing her for potentially violent work, and to be prepared to assume command not just of the female cohort of students, but also, should the need arise, of male comrades too.

There has been little study of the gender politics of the pre-war SF and how these articulated with wider Falange activities; unsurprisingly, the SF's long post-war existence as a state organ has overshadowed its earliest years as a small section of a minority party. The scant examination of the pre-war gender question has concentrated largely on the organization's official discourse and rhetoric. Kathleen Richmond notes, for example, that

The agenda of the pre-war SF echoed in general terms the doctrine of José Antonio but failed to specify how women would contribute to the sought-after unity of the nation. SF's earliest statutes declared its broad aim as 'supporting national-syndicalist militants in their fight against the anti-Spain'. They spoke little about the role of women in general.<sup>37</sup>

Richmond stresses also the conservatism of José Antonio's position on gender, but his public statements on the matter were infrequent and laconic, and, as Jo Labanyi has argued, they could be highly ambiguous.<sup>38</sup> Considering the everyday practice of Falangist/SF gender politics suggested by the 'Y' award applications in addition to the vague and indeterminate public discourse of both organizations nuances our understanding of the way that gender difference was managed by pre-war Spanish

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<sup>36</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 16, Doc. 3, 25.05.1935.

<sup>37</sup> Richmond, *Women and Spanish Fascism*, 7.

<sup>38</sup> Labanyi, 'Resemanticizing Feminine Surrender', 77-78.

fascists, both male and female. The Falange and its institutions seems to have shown considerable pragmatism or opportunism as far as gender difference, and appropriate roles for women were concerned. Such pragmatism was already tacitly evident in the widespread practice of using SF women to carry arms for their male comrades (as females were less likely to be stopped and searched).<sup>39</sup> But the 'Y' award applications suggest that it went considerably further: the concession of significant formal political power was possible too, and Viguri's account intimates also that women's involvement in the Falange's more violent tasks went beyond the simple caching of arms. The proclaimed impropriety or unsuitedness of women for formal political roles or leadership posts within Falange institutions such as the SEU seems, then, to have been a rhetorical figleaf both for the male hierarchy as well for highly able women, hiding a closer -- though never equal -- sharing of the political work between the sexes, and allowing female members considerable room for manoeuvre in some cases.

The pragmatism of the early Falange in relation to gender difference and appropriate roles for women should not come as a surprise: it was a small, penurious organization which had to make the most of its scarce human resources.<sup>40</sup> But what might have come as a surprise to SF members benefiting from such flexibility was its fairly swift ending after the Unification of Nationalist-aligned forces in 1937, the promulgation of the 1938 *Fuero del Trabajo*, and, in the same year, the SF's ban on

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<sup>39</sup> This practice was first officially acknowledged in Pilar Primo de Rivera's wartime 'Historia de la Sección Femenina' (see footnote 4), but was sanitized by sprightly illustrations of young women carrying fashionable bags to conceal the arms, or housewives tidying away weapons into under-stair spaces or into blooming window boxes.

<sup>40</sup> But this opportunism may not wholly have been conditioned by its financial position: Sheelagh Ellwood has convincingly argued that opportunistic pragmatism was one of Falangism's most enduring features from its inception to its fragmentation in the mid-late 1970s. See *Spanish Fascism in the Franco Era* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987). And such pragmatism was not confined to the Spanish Falange, as scholars of other right-wing women's movements have noted. See, for example, Margaret Power, *Right-Wing Women in Chile: Feminine Power and Struggle Against Allende 1964-1973* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State UP, 2002).

married members' holding of leadership positions. The New State dramatically reduced opportunities for women's participation in formal politics as well as limiting their non-political professional opportunities; fascist women's post-war mobilization was reframed as welfare or education-oriented, and married members in senior positions were demoted.

It is not possible to know for certain how the women discussed above felt about the narrowing of the channels open to them after Unification in April 1937. García Salto went on to occupy senior postwar roles within the SF;<sup>41</sup> Mercedes Fórmica left the organization after the war, and later became openly critical of it. It may be significant that it was she who first tried, via the SF, to promote postwar legal reform in order to combat discrimination against working women and widen their access to the labour market,<sup>42</sup> so it is not implausible that her discontent stemmed in part from the new, even harsher political landscape for women under Franco. Viguri briefly became the director of the first SF *Escuela de Mandos* towards the end of the war, but was replaced in July 1939. The 'authorized' history of the SF is costive on this matter.<sup>43</sup> It may be that Viguri married, so requiring her to stand down. Her husband, Narciso Perales, became a well-known post-Unification Falange dissident; it is possible that Viguri shared her husband's dissident views, but how much her views would have been conditioned by gender issues remains unknowable.

What emerges from these documents is that a number of SF members' contribution to the pre-war Falange went significantly beyond the prison-visiting, fundraising, uniform-sewing and arms-caching role outlined in the scant coverage of its

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<sup>41</sup> Coincidentally, amongst these was membership of the 'Y' awards committee, responsible for adjudicating on the candidates' applications examined in this study!

<sup>42</sup> See Mercedes Fórmica's memoirs *Pequeña historia de ayer*, vol 2. *Escucho el silencio* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1984).

<sup>43</sup> Suárez Fernández, *Crónica de la Sección Femenina*, 76.

earliest existence. And the Falange was willing to concede -- pragmatically as and when need dictated -- not inconsiderable power and responsibility to its female members, particularly those who were most highly educated. But as Margaret Power has noted, '[s]cholars' efforts to highlight the "weapons of the weak" should not blind us to the effectiveness of the weapons of the strong':<sup>44</sup> if, after Unification, García del Salto, Fórmica or Viguri missed their former political existence, the careful self-positioning suggested by the 'Y' award documentation meant that their skilful rhetorical tactics had painted them into a discursive corner as far as any protest within the organization was concerned.

Not all SF members had the opportunity to enter the formal political arena; their political activism took place largely in the domestic sphere. But this is a topic that does not feature in the institutional studies of the SF, or in the later histories that draw on oral-source accounts. When the elderly senior *mandos* interviewed towards the end of the century do fleetingly mention the domestic, it is other people's homes that are remembered. Victoria Lorée Enders quotes one *mando* describing a post-war SF campaign in Avila:

[...] The houses were in very bad shape, very dirty [...] we put on a hygiene campaign. We told them, you must clean the house... whitewash them (sic). They had to plant flowers: we provided flowerpots, flowers. We brought them cleaning supplies. Then we said to them (the villagers), we will return within a month. This house—cleaner, the children—cleaner, and so on.<sup>45</sup>

In the Y award applications, women are writing about home not as a space to be entered, inspected, and modified by the SF vision of social amelioration; rather, the

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<sup>44</sup> Power, *Right-Wing Women in Chile*, 10.

<sup>45</sup> 'Problematic Portraits: the Ambiguous Role of the *Sección Femenina* of the Falange' in *Constructing Spanish Womanhood: Female Identity in Modern Spain*, ed. Victoria Lorée Enders and Pamela Beth Radcliff (New York: State U of New York P, 1999), 375-97 (p. 386). Lorée Enders seems to have been the first scholar of the SF to have drawn on oral sources: her interviews were conducted in the late 1980s, though not published until a decade later.

material is of interest for what it might tell us about SF members' own domestic lives, and for what it might indicate -- explicitly or obliquely -- about how they perceived their own possibilities of movement between the domestic and the public political spheres. Many reports describe homes as a site of significant political activism (in the manufacture of uniforms and insignia) or contribution to war (caching objects or people);<sup>46</sup> some women who left the domestic sphere to work in pursuit of their political aims before or during the war record their return to the home to care full-time for ailing or wounded relatives. The applications also reveal that Nationalist homes in the Republican zone could become a temporarily sacramental space, allowing clandestine masses to be said, and christenings and marriages to be celebrated;<sup>47</sup> they could become a violated space, too -- a place from which family members or hidden friends were removed and objects confiscated; occasionally, home was represented as an unsafe place to be fled from in the face of persecution.<sup>48</sup>

In general, women write of their homes lives in a laconic way, with the occasional formulaic insult of the Republican enemy, or matter-of-fact reference to loss or hardship.<sup>49</sup> The tone of the reports is no doubt shaped in part by the discursive context: exhaustive detail about domestic routine or long complaints are not to be expected in an application for a decoration rewarding stoic sacrifice or heroism. But one exception to this laconicism is the recounting of the SF members' interactions with

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<sup>46</sup> Hidden people ranged from Civil Guards to priests; objects from share certificates through arms to radio sets. See, for example, RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 12, Docs. 160 (date not recorded), 169 (09.10.1939), 232 (01.10.1939).

<sup>47</sup> See, for example, RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 12, Docs. 166 (15.09.1939), 181 (date not recorded), the unnumbered document between Docs. 192 & 193 (date not recorded), and 225 (date not recorded).

<sup>48</sup> See, for example, RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 12, Docs. 234 (date not recorded), 248, 29.09.1939.

<sup>49</sup> One Madrid member records the following: 'sufrí varios registros de la policía roja, logrando no llegara a realizar los propósitos que en su vil corazón anidaban' (RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 12, Doc. 153, 21.09.1939); another notes that 'Pertenezco a una familia muy perseguida habiendo tenido también en mi casa a mi hermano político el cual fué sacado del mismo y asesinado por los rojos el día 21 de agosto de 1936'. RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 12, Doc. 169, 09.10.1939.

porters and concierges: such encounters are recalled in sharp detail or are otherwise accorded considerable significance. To be sure, the porter or concierge (near-ubiquitous in 1930s middle-class domiciles and public buildings) as dangerous surveiller or traitor is a staple of Nationalist accounts of the home front.<sup>50</sup> But the women's recollections suggest that this figure held an importance for them beyond this stereotype.

One such series of encounters, and its associated consequences, were deemed significant enough to be recounted not just by the member most directly affected, but also by her referee. The member in question was using her Granada home to make and store Falangist insignia alongside other comrades. The referee reports that consequences of movements in and out of the home in the initial days of the July 1936 uprising:

fue motivo de desconfianza para otros inquilinos marxistas y especialmente de los porteros que observaron el movimiento de entrada y salida de camaradas [...] ocasionando incidentes.<sup>51</sup>

It is the member herself who gives an indication of just how conflictive such incidents between the Falangists and her neighbours were, and what they cost:

En los días del Alzamiento el trabajo fué intensivo, [...] dando lugar [...] a incidentes graves con los porteros de la casa, y con uno de los vecinos también izquierdista, que se suicidó cuando se dió cuenta del triunfo nacional.<sup>52</sup>

It is with these words that the member's testimony closes. Although her precise feelings about the confrontations are not easily discernible, the position of these events – out of chronological order, and reserved till last – suggests that they may have some culminating significance for her, containing an element of indirect vindication of her and

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<sup>50</sup> See, for example, the reference in Paul Preston, *The Spanish Holocaust: Inquisition and Extermination in Twentieth-Century Spain* (London: Harper, 2012), 261.

<sup>51</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 16, Doc. 12, 11.03.1940.

<sup>52</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 16, Doc. 12, 28.03.1941.

others' domestic work, which is here narratively entangled with the wider Nationalist victory.

Some victories are obtained not at the expense of porters, but with their help.

One Madrid SF member recalls that

En los primeros días de nuestros G[lorioso] M[ovimiento] fui denunciada, no teniendo más sospechas que quien lo hiciera, pues el portero fue al Radio no 8 en unión de las milicias que venían y rompió la denuncia porque venían a llevarme detenida. [E]sto lo hizo el portero en agradecimiento porque yo le proporcioné que se casara pues vivían en pecado mortal, bauticé a un niño de dicho matrimonio que tenía varios meses más tarde.<sup>53</sup>

The rationale for inclusion of this particular anecdote and the significance it holds for the 'Y' award applicant seem multi-layered. The story has a clear moral, affirming the power of religion as a binding agent across class and political barriers, and has a further providential quality: the souls of the porter and his family are saved by the SF member's proselytising, and she, in turn, is rewarded with the salvation of her liberty. A proud foregrounding of her own agency is also evident, as the use of the first-person 'bauticé' – rhetorically usurping the sacerdotal role – suggests.

Encounters with concierges were not of course confined to the home environment (as Justina Viguri's recollection of the violent confrontation with a porter at Madrid University attests). Another Madrid SF member, who worked for one of the clandestine Nationalist support networks, vividly recalls in her application the difficulties she faced when attempting to visit her daughter, detained in a Republican prison hospital:

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<sup>53</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 12, Doc. 166.

me supuso muchas humillaciones pues el conserje [...] me echó tres veces a la calle llenándome de insultos y llamando a la guardia para que disparara contra mí.<sup>54</sup>

It seems safe to assume that this anecdote is included partly as evidence of hardship experienced, persistence in the face of adversity, and valiant disregard for personal safety. Aside from any fulfilment of the 'Y' award criteria though, what is most prominent here is the shame and outrage the member feels at being thwarted in her enterprise by a social inferior. This particular member is then careful to note that she continues her work for the victorious forces after the war, proudly recording that 'Debí hacerlo bien pues varias veces me ha felicitado la Delegada'.<sup>55</sup> But, she records subsequently, her work outside the home is subsequently brought to an end: 'Como mi hija se agravó en su enfermedad me retiré a mi casa para dedicarme a su cuidado'.<sup>56</sup> In contrast to the note of victory with which the Granada member's application concludes, this account seems to close on a bald note of bathetic defeat.

It is the case of this last applicant that offers a clue as to why the porter might be the recipient of such sharply-focused attention beyond the immediate meanings that the women above confer on them. The encounters may bulk large in the testimonies because the figure of the porter symbolizes the threshold between the domestic and public spheres. It may be telling that only male porters feature in these testimonies: the porter figure may in part be a trope signifying the perceived importance and enormity of the boundaries some of these women were crossing when they undertook political, or other work for the SF before or during the war. As the war progressed, a growing number of SF members were returned to the home by the consequences of Franco's

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<sup>54</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 15, Doc. 47, 07.08.1940. Presumably the porter suspected her of trying to smuggle in prohibited items or disseminate information helpful to the enemy. The rest of the member's account suggests that this was not an unreasonable assumption.

<sup>55</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 15, Doc. 47.

<sup>56</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 15, Doc. 47.

Unification of the Nationalist forces, the introduction of the *Fuero del Trabajo*, the SF's subsequent retroactive ban on married members' holding leadership posts, and the caring duties that fell to women. The New State's pro-natalism, and its cult of domesticity made it difficult for the Falangist women affected to present this return explicitly as a defeat, demotion or disappointment. It may be significant that both the clandestine-network member and the Granada member above fell into the category of those returned, apparently involuntarily, to the home; it does not seem wholly implausible to suggest that the porter may in some such cases be a proxy figure representing other barriers, frustrations and disappointments faced by Nationalist women who had crossed the threshold – literally or symbolically -- to enter the political sphere before or during the war, and who were shortly afterwards impelled to re-cross it back into the home.

The 'Y' award applications certainly contain no echoing of official SF and New State discourse eulogising the home as the safe (and correct) sphere for the wife and mother. The same is not quite true of the representation of family, but neither can statements about the family be taken simply at face value. Like the subject of home, family does not tend to feature in the elderly, largely single, *mandos'* recollections of the 1990s and 2000s studies; it does, in contrast, appear in the 'Y' award documentation, but strikingly, the subject is overwhelmingly mentioned only as an explanation for the members' foregoing, or standing down from SF activities. Typical references include the following, written by an Oviedo member and a Teruel member respectively:

[...] durante los 15 meses de asedio presté los siguientes servicios:  
Talleres de FE [...] Hospitales [...] fui nombrada Delegada de la SF de FET  
y de las JONS el 1 de julio de 1938 desempeñando el cargo hasta el 31 de

julio del año actual en el que cesé por serme necesario atender a mis hijitos enfermos.<sup>57</sup>

[Trabajé como enfermera] hasta la hora que mi hermano cayó herido y que a consecuencia de encontrarse inmóvil, tuve que dedicarme a él e involuntariamente retirarme del servicio que prestaba.<sup>58</sup>

Without further information, there is no reason to question these explanations. But the fact that across many hundreds of documents, family commitments are the *only* reason ever given for withdrawal from the SF in the applications should give the reader pause. Given the new regime's representation of the family as sacrosanct institution, the 'return to family' may have offered itself as an obvious convenient fiction for some women who had lost interest in or become disillusioned by the SF but who, for possible economic or other reasons, needed the endorsement that the award conferred.

The SF hierarchy was clearly sensitive to this possible waning of interest or enthusiasm. Referees and other members of the hierarchy were quick to voice their suspicions when they felt that women's accounts were not to be taken at face value. After she was awarded a 'Y' decoration for having been a founder member of the Orense branch, the Delegada Provincial noted that

[esta] camarada [...] no ha querido desplazarse a Medina pare serle impuesta la Y de Fundadora aludiendo asuntos familiares lo que sin embargo creo no es mas que un pretexto ya que siempre rehusa todo cuanto le propone la SF.<sup>59</sup>

Similarly, a Melilla founder member wanted the decoration, but excused herself from the public award ceremony. She explained that she had a teething baby, 'y como buena madre española no puedo confiarlo a manos extranjeras'.<sup>60</sup> In this case, the clunky reproduction of official discourse in the yoking of motherhood to patriotic duty may

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<sup>57</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 13, Doc. 47. 05.08.1939.

<sup>58</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 15, number of document not recorded, 24.09.1939

<sup>59</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 17, Doc. 22, 29.05.1942.

<sup>60</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 17, Doc. 21, 21.05.1942.

have overegged the pudding slightly: it certainly did not impress the Asesoría Jurídica in Madrid, which recommended only the lowest award for this founder member of her branch, '[c]omo está algo apartada en la actualidad'.<sup>61</sup>

But the 'return to family' was not just a shield some 'Y' award applicants used to defend themselves against suspicion of non-compliance or a lack of interest: it could serve also as a pretext for the SF hierarchy itself when removing women from leadership posts after Pilar Primo de Rivera published her Circular 99 in August 1938. This Circular obliged married leaders, or widowed leaders with children, to stand down from their posts lest SF commitments detract from their duties as wives and mothers.<sup>62</sup> Circular 99 appears to have had a powerfully demotivating effect on some members: one referee for a founder member in Granada who had achieved a senior position within her branch noted:

Después de [l principio de la guerra] continuó al frente de la SF como Jefe de ella hasta Julio del 38 en que dejó el puesto por ser casada, de acuerdo con lo que ordenó la Nacional. [...] A partir de la fecha en que dejó la JP ha prescendido [...] de la SF.<sup>63</sup>

Another referee for the same woman sought a more face-saving formulation to describe the process of being stood down because of marital status:

En resumen [...] ha sido la camarada que siempre estuvo en su puesto, que a todas horas nos elntó [alentó] y que supo sacrificarse en cuantos actos de servicio fueron necesarios realizar, hasta que, acatando una orden de nuestra Delegada Nacional, abandonó la Jefatura Provincial por ser casada, y volvió, después de una lucha continua de dos años, a la dulce tranquilidad de su hogar, donde hace de su marido y de sus hijos unos falangistas excelentes.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 17, Doc. 21. Undated.

<sup>62</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 57.

<sup>63</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 16, Doc. 12, 23.04.1940.

<sup>64</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 16, Doc. 12, 03.05.1939.

The softening and exalting of what seems to have been an alienating demotion for the member in question may have masked the disappointment not just of the 'Y' applicant, but also of this second referee, who appeared to lament the loss of her colleague.

SF members were not just demoted after Unification because of their marital status; some were removed from leadership posts in order to make way for *Margaritas* (female members of the Carlist movement) who were subsumed into the new coalition Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las Juntas de Ofensiva Nacional-Sindicalista. Again the 'return to family' could be used to mask discontent or humiliation at such usurpation. Not all referees were aware of or willing to acknowledge a link between Unification-related demotion and subsequent alienation from the SF. One reference for a Granada member noted disapprovingly:

Después de[l comienzo] de la guerra continuó esta camarada trabajando con todo entusiasmo durante un año, Pero ya hacia Junio del 37 se cansó y pretextando una grave enfermedad de su padre y después la muerte de este no ha vuelto a preocuparse de la SF para nada.<sup>65</sup>

It is another referee for the same member who suggested a wider context for this sudden loss of enthusiasm:

[...] en la época que trabaj[ó] (el primer año de guerra) su labor estaba rodeada de halagos y lucimientos [...]. Con el Circular de la Unificación vino el tener que ocupar la Secretaría Provincial una margarita, por el cual motivo cesó en dicho cargo [esta] camarada, siendo unánimemente sentida por toda la provincia, ya que con su cariño y recio espíritu falangista fue la camarada a quien todas volvíamos los ojos en los momentos difíciles, y de la que siempre nos separamos confortadas.<sup>66</sup>

The regretful words of the referee (a senior member of the local hierarchy, possibly less vulnerable than those further down the chain of command) may here be veiling some subtle criticism of Unification -- or the SF leadership's handling of the process. Her

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<sup>65</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 16, Doc. 12, 23.04.1940.

<sup>66</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 16, Doc. 12.

emphasis on her members' ideological fidelity and commitment specifically to Falangism (one's 'recio espíritu falangista'; the other's future as a nurturer of excellent future Falangistas, both quoted above) may be present to boost the women's credentials for an award, but might also be a gentle rebuke to the leadership at the political loss or sacrifice entailed by Unification with monarchists or otherwise traditionalist conservative forces.

Precisely because of the discretion or taciturnity in their own accounts, whether the alienation of members most directly affected by Unification or Circular 99 was due primarily to political discontent with the Unification itself, or to subsequent organizational changes within the SF, is not possible to discern definitively. Of course the explicit expression of dissent is not easy in an application for a decoration rewarding loyalty (and also offering the opportunity to [re]gain some political capital and employment privileges). But what this material suggests is that it was the members themselves who wanted to be the ones to determine the duration and conditions of their own mobilisation. If some saw it as a temporary measure, contingent on unusual and threatening times, it seems that it was they who wanted to be the ones to decide its end point, rather than be stood down purely at the organization's behest. Women's motivations for their SF work are not reducible to a simple narrative of self-abnegating and sacrificial service, then, but neither should we assume that their withdrawal is attributable entirely to personal pique or thwarted career ambition. In her examination of SF *mandos*, Kathleen Richmond states that '[t]here was an acceptance of the renunciation of self, as evidenced by the need to be moved, promoted or demoted according to the needs of the organization.'<sup>67</sup> Richmond does not document this claim; it may conceivably have some truth in relation to the post-war SF, but the 'Y' award

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<sup>67</sup> Richmond, *Women and Spanish Fascism*, 114.

application material suggests a rather more complex picture of SF members' circumstances, motivations and limited channels of expression in the 1930s.

Nevertheless, a couple of members did feel able to express disappointment at such post-Unification changes in a slightly more explicit way: one Bilbao member wrote directly to Pilar Primo de Rivera to complain about having been granted an 'Y de rojo' (the lowest level of award) when she felt that her service merited at least an 'Y de plata'. She mentioned as justification

la fe y el entusiasmo con que he trabajado por nuestra Causa y las penalidades que he sufrido durante la dominación roja en Vizcaya, cuyos elementos, me condenaron a muerte como mayor responsable, buscándome con gran insistencia para ejecutarme.<sup>68</sup>

She also pointedly referred to her 'obligada dimisión, por impuestas razones de mi nuevo estado' (her marriage).<sup>69</sup> The implication seems clear: this member was unable to realize her potential fully because changes the hierarchy retroactively introduced to its leadership eligibility criteria hampered her ability to contribute to the cause.

Another member also wrote directly to the SF leader about the 'Y' award eligibility criteria and its incompatibility with family commitments. Having lost two brothers in the war, this young woman, a founder member of her local SF before the war and its first Delegada Provincial, was now solely responsible for the support of her widowed mother, and so must work. Her service to the SF included acting as personal liaison for José Antonio Primo de Rivera, then imprisoned in Alicante gaol. After the war, she was informed by the local Delegada that, in order to be eligible for a 'Y' award, she must render two or three months' further active service to the SF. She wrote plaintively:

al decirle que yo no podía, me dijo que aunque fuera pertenecer al grupo artístico para cantar o aprender a tocar algún instrumento

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<sup>68</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 16, Doc. 5, 31.10.1942.

<sup>69</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 16, Doc. 5.

musical. [...]¿Tengo pues que perder la Y de plata por no poder ir a tocar un rato o cantar? cuando se trata de cantar creo yo que es mas necesario que no le falte nada a mi madre que todo lo demás.<sup>70</sup>

It is possible that written between the lines of her detailed complaint there is expressed here a less explicit dissatisfaction with postwar existence — her own and/or the SF's. For all the risks and hardship her SF service entailed before and during the war, this member's account suggests that she went from pioneering political actor, bearing significant leadership and other responsibilities, to a woman whose professional and personal activities were tightly circumscribed by unexpectedly-imposed family duties. That the SF's expanded post-war role included relatively trivial entertainment activities may have added insult to injury for this member.<sup>71</sup>

There is only one instance where family commitments are mentioned in the 'Y' award documentation *not* as an explanation for withdrawal from the organization. A male referee reported an example of a Palencia member's bellicose audacity and commitment to her cause:

Con ocasión de una colisión entre Falangistas y Socialistas [...] esta camarada [...] que ya tenía a su marido en la cárcel, preparo una pistola detonadora al camarada agresor con el fin de defenderle y librarle de la prisión; todo esto preparativo lo hizo en la misma noche del atentado para tenerle a salvo la mañana siguiente sin pensar en el abandono de sus dos hijos que quedaban desamparados en el hogar.<sup>72</sup>

Although the referee praises this member and presents her as deserving of an award, the use of terms such as 'abandono' and 'desamparados' indicates an unmistakable ambivalence about her enthusiasm to be involved in the most direct political action. And

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<sup>70</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 16, Doc. 2. Date of letter not legible, but marked as received by the Delegación Nacional of the SF on 18.11.40.

<sup>71</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 16, Doc. 2. It is possible that it was her personal connection with José Antonio that gave this young woman the confidence to approach Pilar Primo de Rivera directly, and possibly that same connection ensured that she was subsequently awarded the 'Y de plata' she wanted.

<sup>72</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 17, Doc 23, 03.05.1940. Like the violence in which Viguri was involved, this incident did not take place in the heat of war, but refers instead to an earlier period in 1936.

the sympathetic referee for the Granada member discussed above who had to step down from her leadership role following Circular 99 suggests that, like the Palencia candidate, the member herself did not see marriage (or children) as an impediment to her commitment to the SF cause – rather quite the opposite: ‘a pesar de que su marido fue detenido, [esta camarada] no se desanimó, antes por el contrario trabajaba cada día con más celo y entusiasmo’.<sup>73</sup> These last two examples suggest clearly that some women, at least, seemed to view the combination of SF and family commitments not as incompatible but, conversely, as mutually reinforcing.

The ambiguities and occlusions in the material relating to family give a measure of just how neuralgically sensitive an issue it was: it spoke fundamentally to the very parameters of liberty and duties of what the Falange, and then the New State, deemed appropriate models of womanhood. Whether or not their power and responsibilities had been consciously sought and reflected on at length, the members in leadership positions lacked a vocabulary to defend them when removed by the organization. It was particularly difficult when such measures were couched in terms of political imperatives such as winning the war (Unification) or defence of the traditional family (Circular 99, and an article of faith for the Right as a whole, not easily questioned). In such conditions, it is understandable that some women’s discontent might be expressed only obliquely. That such members should seek discursive recourse from the institution invoked to curb their activities is a function of the powerful impasse in which they found themselves.

More broadly, this ‘Y’ award material adds to and nuances existing historiography on the consequences of Unification for the SF, and early change within

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<sup>73</sup> RAH, ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 16, Doc. 12, 03.05.1939.

the organization. Unification was a difficult and bitterly-debated event across the Falange movement, and the discontent of a significant cadre of male Falangists at Unification has been amply documented, both by Falangists themselves and historians.<sup>74</sup> There is very little material pertaining to female Falangists' anxieties about the future of Falangism under a Franco-led coalition of traditionally conservative political tendencies.<sup>75</sup> When they were interviewed towards the end of the century, the former *mandos* who would have lived through Unification as SF members make little mention of it. It is possible that Nationalist victory, and subsequent long, apparently fulfilling service to the SF smoothed out its contemporaneous problematic or uncomfortable aspects, rendering it less remarkable in hindsight. Perhaps partly as a result, even when stressing the importance of Unification to the development of the SF, later histories of the organization committed to the use of the oral-source material perforce treat Unification primarily as a matter of high politics (in which Pilar Primo de Rivera manoeuvres between different interests high up in the Falange and Francoist hierarchy), or in terms of institutional opportunity (to move from subsection of a party to a major state organ).<sup>76</sup> It is reasonable to assume that some female Falangists might have shared their male comrades' preoccupations to the point of alienation from the organization. By not attending to this dimension, such approaches risk depoliticising SF members' relationship to the organization. In addition to allowing some appreciation of Unification's consequences in terms of the lived experience of members, the 'Y' award applications point strongly to the possibility that withdrawal from the organization,

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<sup>74</sup> See Pedro Laín Entralgo, *Descargo de conciencia* (Barcelona: Barral, 1976); Dionisio Ridruejo, *Casi unas memorias* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1976); Ellwood, *Spanish Fascism in the Franco Era*; Stanley G. Payne, *Fascism in Spain 1923-1977* (Madison: Wisconsin, 1999).

<sup>75</sup> A very small number of accounts appear only after the transition to democracy, and are written by the most elite or prominent former members. See Pilar Primo de Rivera, *Recuerdos de una vida* (Madrid: DYRSA, 1983) and Mercedes Fórmica, *Pequeña Historia de Ayer*, vol. 1 *Visto y vivido* and vol. 2 *Escucho el silencio* (Barcelona: Planeta, 1982; 1984).

<sup>76</sup> See, for example, Ofer, *Señoritas in Blue*, 17-18; Richmond, *Women and Spanish Fascism*, 66-72.

particularly between the late spring of 1937 and the summer of 1938, was an act of dissenting political agency for some women, even if it was not easily expressed as such.

If the historiography of Unification has been too skewed towards a high-political optic, study of Circular 99 has in some ways not been *sufficiently* considered in terms of its high-political or pragmatic dimensions. It is possible that the historiography has been over-conditioned by the responses of a small cadre of unmarried former *mandos*. Inbal Ofer has noted the ambivalent reactions of her interviewees when she raised the issue: some seemed unaware of it, or denied its existence until confronted with the text of the Circular. Possibly because of this indeterminate response, and because her interviewees were themselves single, Ofer does not pursue the matter, concentrating instead on the question of why members, including Pilar Primo de Rivera might have chosen not to marry. While interesting and plausible, her discussion does not deal with the question of why such a status might have been *imposed* on women by Primo at a particular juncture by Circular 99.<sup>77</sup> Seeing the effect of the retroactive ban on married leaders evidenced in the 'Y' award application material reminds us that single status was not simply an eternal feature of the SF elite, and helps resituate it in a more precise context, prompting the question of why it was introduced specifically in June 1938, during wartime, when experienced female labour was at a premium. The obvious – though hitherto unexplored – answer is that the Circular was prompted by the publication of the New State's *Fuero del Trabajo*, published just three months before in

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<sup>77</sup> Ofer, *Señoritas in Blue*, 45-49. An earlier, excellent exploration of the unmarried status of SF members by Inmaculada Blasco Herranz had also framed its enquiry in terms of the opportunities and autonomy it offered members: see 'Las mujeres de la Sección Femenina de Falange: sumisión, poder y autonomía', in *Las mujeres y el poder: representaciones y prácticas de vida*, ed. Ana I. Cerrada Jiménez and Cristina Segura Graño (Madrid: Al-Mudayna/AEIHM, 2000), 253-268.

March 1938, which set out to ‘liberate’ married women from the workshop and factory.<sup>78</sup>

Needless to say, SF leadership responsibilities fell into neither category. But Primo de Rivera’s re-aligning of SF policy with the spirit of the *Fuero* might have been part of a strategy to curry favour with the New State in order to widen her sphere of influence and control: after Unification, she found herself vying for power with Mercedes Sanz Bachiller and María Rosa Urraca Pastor, who led the most successful and prominent wartime auxiliary/relief programmes (*Auxilio Social* and *Frentes y Hospitales* respectively). Circular 99 was one means of marking out the distinctiveness of Primo’s leadership, promoting the single-mindedness of the SF elite’s devotion to service, and maybe also part of Primo’s imbuing the SF with an almost nun-like purity of purpose and action – shortly after Circular 99, she announced that St Teresa of Avila had been chosen as the Organization’s patron saint.<sup>79</sup> This is not to reduce Circular 99 solely to Primo’s jockeying for power within the New State: its promulgation is likely to have been due to several different factors. Nonetheless, there is enough circumstantial evidence to suggest that it was at least in part motivated by Primo’s hard-headed concern to strengthen her organisational power within the New State.

The elegant brooch that served as the ‘Y’ decoration insignia may symbolically have resolved the tensions between the quasi-military mobilisation of SF members and traditionalist feminine attributes; the ‘Y’ award documentation reveals that tensions were much less easily resolved in the lived experience of some members during part of

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<sup>78</sup> The full text of the *Fuero* may be consulted at:  
<http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras/08149629022036195209079/p0000001.htm#I>  
[Date accessed: 2 August 2013]

<sup>79</sup> RAH ADANA, Serie Azul, Carpeta 2, Circular 10 bis, 15.10.1938. Incidentally (or not), St Teresa was, famously, also revered by Franco. In co-opting the figure of the religious single woman, the SF also marked out a distinctive ground for itself in relation to the women’s section of the civil association *Acción Católica*, which relied on the concept of the ‘madre social’ as the legitimising model for its social activism.

the SF's most critical phase of its existence. Raiding the lexicon of medieval Spanish history to legitimize his mythical revanchist vision, Franco instructed SF members at the end of the war to undertake 'la reconquista del hogar';<sup>80</sup> the 'Y' award applications suggest that some early members were, without renouncing the home, seeking to move in the opposite direction to conquer new political and public spaces. Consciously or unconsciously exploiting the margin afforded by the ambiguities and pragmatic needs of an early undermanned Falangism and then the dislocations of war, some early members were militating for more than they could admit to (either to themselves or to others in their own organization). As a result, when their room for manoeuvre was drastically curtailed by the post-Unification Francoist New State, the 'Y' award documentation suggests that they at times lacked a vocabulary or cultural context to articulate their experiences, expectations or frustrations, or could express them only obliquely.

Over time, some members found new ways in which to carve out spaces for agency and autonomy for themselves; by the 1960s, the SF was lobbying the Francoist state for greater legal and professional freedom for women.<sup>81</sup> The largely frictionless, homogenized accounts of the SF's achievements appearing in the recollections elicited by scholars towards the end of the century smooth over the rough terrain and bypass the dead ends that some early members (particularly those who were married), came up against. The 'Y' award material allows us a glimpse of a rather less smooth, continuous and uniform trajectory of the SF, giving us a greater sense of the complexity and diversity of early female Falangist experience and aspiration. The introduction to this study noted that SF members paid a considerable monetary price for their 'Y'

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<sup>80</sup> SF de la FET y de las JONS, *Consejos nacionales (libro primero)*, (Madrid: SF de la FET y de las JONS), 99.

<sup>81</sup> See Inmaculada Blasco Herranz, 'Las mujeres de la Sección Femenina de Falange: sumisión, poder y autonomía', Ofer, *Señoritas in Blue*, chapter 3, and Celia Valiente Fernández, 'La liberalización del régimen franquista: la ley de 22 de Julio de 1961 sobre derechos políticos, profesionales y de trabajo de la mujer', *Historia Social* 31 (1998), 45-65, which provides a wider perspective than Ofer's account.

awards and their continued work for the Franco state; the 'Y' documentation suggests that some paid a higher figurative price than others, and that the cost was not entirely expected. But the cost of Falangist women's particular political wager must always, finally, be measured against the extortionately higher price extracted from hundreds of thousands of Republican women by the new Francoist state – a price for which no recompense (symbolic or material) was ever made available.