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Female Formation and *la nueva mujer* of the Falange

The sacred mission of forming future wives and mothers was entrusted to the women's cadre of the Spanish Falange, otherwise known as *Sección Femenina* (1934-77). Its modest origins (not to be confused with its far less modest social and political underpinnings) can be traced to a group of seven women, mainly kin of male activists, who, a year after the launching of the party by José Antonio Primo de Rivera and two years before the breakout of the Civil War, coalesced under the leadership of José Antonio's sister, Pilar.¹ With the absorption of the Falange into Franco's National Movement,² *Sección Femenina* assumed the role of mediator between the state and its female constituents, thus forming a dominant cultural filter through which to interpret women's familial, social, and political obligations. Despite the Falange's waning prestige, that *Sección Femenina* remained one of its most active and staunch proponents for over four decades (nominally outlasting Franco's regime) was by and large due to Pilar's proselytizing zeal and unflagging devotion to her brother's pronouncedly fascist program of national-syndicalist revolution.³ By a broad consensus, she was "both the link with the original truths of Falangism and the guarantor of their survival within the National Movement."⁴

The chapter first appeared in the form of the article as "The Right to be Selfless and Other Prerogatives of the Weak in the Rhetoric of *Sección Femenina*" in the Spring 2008 issue of *Romance Quarterly* (55:2): 109-127.

¹ The first women to become members of *Sección Femenina* were in charge of distributing propaganda, looking after the imprisoned Falangists and their families, and raising funds. See Luis Suárez Fernández, *Crónica de la Sección Femenina y su tiempo* (Madrid: C.I.R.S.A., 1993) 28-9.

² On the consolidation of the National Movement, see Sheelagh Ellwood, *Spanish Fascism* 42-4.

³ Drawing on Roger Griffin's definition of generic fascism, Falange may be described as "a revolutionary form of nationalism, one which sets out to be a political, social and ethical revolution, welding the 'people' into a dynamic national community under new elites infused with new heroic values. The core myth which inspires this project is that only a populist, trans-class movement of purifying, cathartic national rebirth (galingenesis) can stem the tide of decadence." *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Routledge, 1991) xi.

⁴ See Kathleen Richmond, *Women and Spanish Fascism* 9; Victoria L. Emders, "Nationalism and Feminism" 673; and Carmen Martín Gaité, *Usos amorosos* 56.

¹⁰ In addition to Blanco's "The Moral Imperative," see Chapter 3 of *Escritoras virtuosas*. For the statistics on female literacy in the second half of the nineteenth century, consider "La enseñanza femenina en la España decimonónica," in *La mujer* 105-32.

It was the war that gave the Falangist women the necessary impetus for mobilization, and by 1939 their cadres counted over a half a million adherents.⁵ While not everyone chose to join the party, the members of the *Sección Femenina* were in charge of providing venues to all who wished to lend their assistance to the nationalist troops. Their activities ranged from distributing leaflets and other propagandistic materials, to attending to the prisoners, caring for the children, looking after the sick and the wounded, facilitating blood donations, organizing training centers for the nurses, founding orphanages, setting up diners and sewing workshops, making clothes, sending women as landresses to the front, embroidering the Falangist insignia, and writing letters to unknown soldiers as expressions of moral support.⁶ Among the right-wing women's most lasting wartime contributions was the creation of Social Aid (*Auxilio Social*) intended to address the nutritional and welfare needs of the civilian population and organize relief programs for the combatants.⁷

The underlying contradiction of the Falangist feminine ideal, as it oscillated between demure (traditional) and enterprising (modern), surfaced early on.⁸ As the *Sección Femenina*'s first manifesto stated: "Nuestra misión no está en la dura lucha, pero sí en la predicación, en la divulgación y en el ejemplo" ("Our mission is not in the rigors of combat, but in preaching, spreading the word, and setting an example") (qtd in Gallego Méndez 212). In a similar fashion, the women involved in the program of *Auxilio Social* claimed that "no se trataba de un intento de confinar a la mujer en su prisión de viejos prejuicios; por el contrario, ahora se la necesitaba como 'madre de todos' en el 'gran hogar' del nacional-sindicalismo" ("it was not about attempting to confine woman to her prison of old prejudices; on the contrary, now she was needed as 'mother of all' in the 'great home' of national-syndicalism") (Scanlon 317). The two statements are homologous in that both present an attempt to redefine women's role in national life, while paying heed to the prevailing bourgeois model of different but complementary gender relations. As we shall see, this ostensibly incongruous stance (of change and intrans-

⁵ For the statistical data, see Geraldine Scanlon, *La polémica feminista* 317.

⁶ See Aurora Mjornellol Gómez, *True Catholic Womanhood* 24-5 and Gallego Méndez, *Mujer, falange y franquismo* 55-7.

⁷ The *Auxilio Social* was eventually supplanted by *Servicio Social* under the aegis of *Sección Femenina*. On the conflict of interests between Marcedes Sanz Bachiller, the founder of *Auxilio Social*, and Pilar Primo de Rivera, see Gallego Méndez 59-61 and Richmond 17.

⁸ The use of the terms "traditional" and "modern" can be problematic, among other reasons, for obscuring the distinction between the value judgments that are passed on specific historical circumstances and those proper to them. For the nationalist ideologues, "traditional" womanhood denoted authentic and intransigent values threatened by the changing socio-economic conditions conducive to the emergence of new feminine types. These observations echo Bridget Aldaraca's comprehensive study of the nineteenth-century feminine ideal. See Aldaraca, *El Ángel del Hogar* 26.

science) turned into *Sección Femenina*'s singular *modus operandi*, and may account for some of the challenges that its study poses to historians.⁹

Official recognition of *Sección Femenina*'s war effort illustrates one of many instances of fitting the organization's unconventional praxis into a familiar and unthreatening mold—a strategy that was to become commonplace in Pilar's own discourses. As the decree of September 28, 1939 averred:

Ejemplar prestación guerrera y política que en nada ha disminuido las tradicionales virtudes de la mujer española, antes bien, las ha exaltado al calor de una profunda educación religiosa y patriótica, que ha constituido incesante preocupación para la *Sección Femenina*, en su anhelo hacia una total formación espiritual de la mujer.

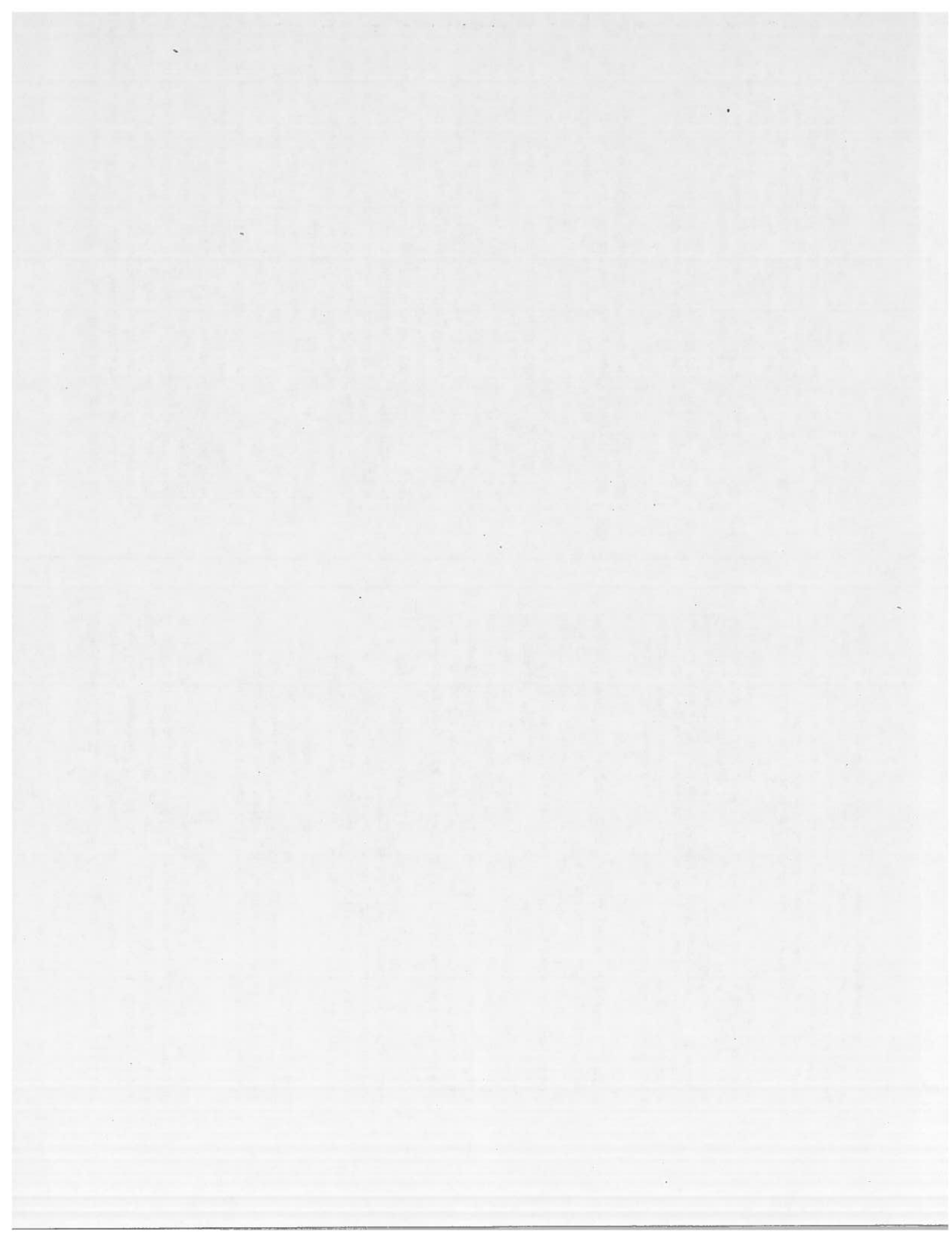
(Exemplary wartime and political effort has in no way diminished the traditional virtues of the Spanish woman, but rather has elevated these virtues in the heat of a profound religious and patriotic education, which has been a constant concern of *Sección Femenina* in its yearning for women's total spiritual formation.) (qtd in Gallego Méndez 209-10)

By presenting the organization's activities as an expression of traditional feminine virtues, the document suppressed any apparent conflict between the image of a publicly engaged wartime woman and the time-honored ideal of a devout housewife advocated by the regime. Furthermore, it precluded the possibility of interpreting the role played by women during the war as acceptable peacetime practice.

Accordingly, one of *Sección Femenina*'s primary tasks under the National Movement was restoring women to the hearth.¹⁰ In her address to 11,000 affiliates gathered in honor of Franco and his troops, Pilar declared, "[e]stamos aquí reunidas solo para festejar vuestra victoria y honrar a vuestros

⁹ Recent scholarship on the subject has tried to refute monolithic portrayals of the organization. While it may be argued that *Sección Femenina*'s activities were defined by the pursuit of doctrinally homogeneous formation, its ideal type—here studied under the label of *la nueva mujer*—constituted an ambiguous cultural sign. See Victoria Lorté Enders, "Problematic Portraits: The Ambiguous Historical Role of the *Sección Femenina* of the Falange," *Constructing Spanish Womanhood* (New York: State U of New York P, 1999) 375-97. That this valuable contribution to the debate is preceded by a quotation—"Understanding does not necessarily imply agreement"—is indicative of the overriding biases at work within the given field of inquiry.

¹⁰ In addition to founding the "domestic schools" (*escuelas de hogar*), *Sección Femenina* was in charge of providing all women's schools, elementary and secondary, with qualified staff to teach the compulsory housecrafts. As Marcillo notes, "no girl could graduate without passing the courses in home economics, sewing, pattern design, arts and crafts, darning and mending, cooking, and music": *True Catholic Womanhood* 44. See also Richmond, *Women and Spanish Fascism* 17, 23, and Pastor i Homs, *La educación femenina en la posguerra* 59-61.



soldados. Porque la única misión que tienen asignada las mujeres en la tarea de la Patria, es el hogar" ("[w]e are gathered here solely to celebrate your victory and to honor your soldiers. Because the only mission assigned to women in the work of the Fatherland is the home") (*Escritos* 152-3). Article two of the aforementioned decree conferred upon *Sección Femenina* the exclusive right to oversee women's political and social formation with the latent stipulation that far from drawing women away from home, it was to enhance their performance as mothers and wives: "Tenéis que daros cuenta de que a las camaradas de las Secciones Femeninas hay que formarlas y enseñarles nuestra doctrina, sin apartarlas para nada de la misión colosal que como mujeres tienen en la vida" ("You have to understand that the comrades of the *Secciones Femeninas* must be formed and taught our doctrine without distancing them in any way from the tremendous mission that, as women, they have in life") (Primo de Rivera, *Discursos* 68). The challenge, as we may infer from the above quotation, lay in binding the new and the old expectations in a seamless feminine ideal.

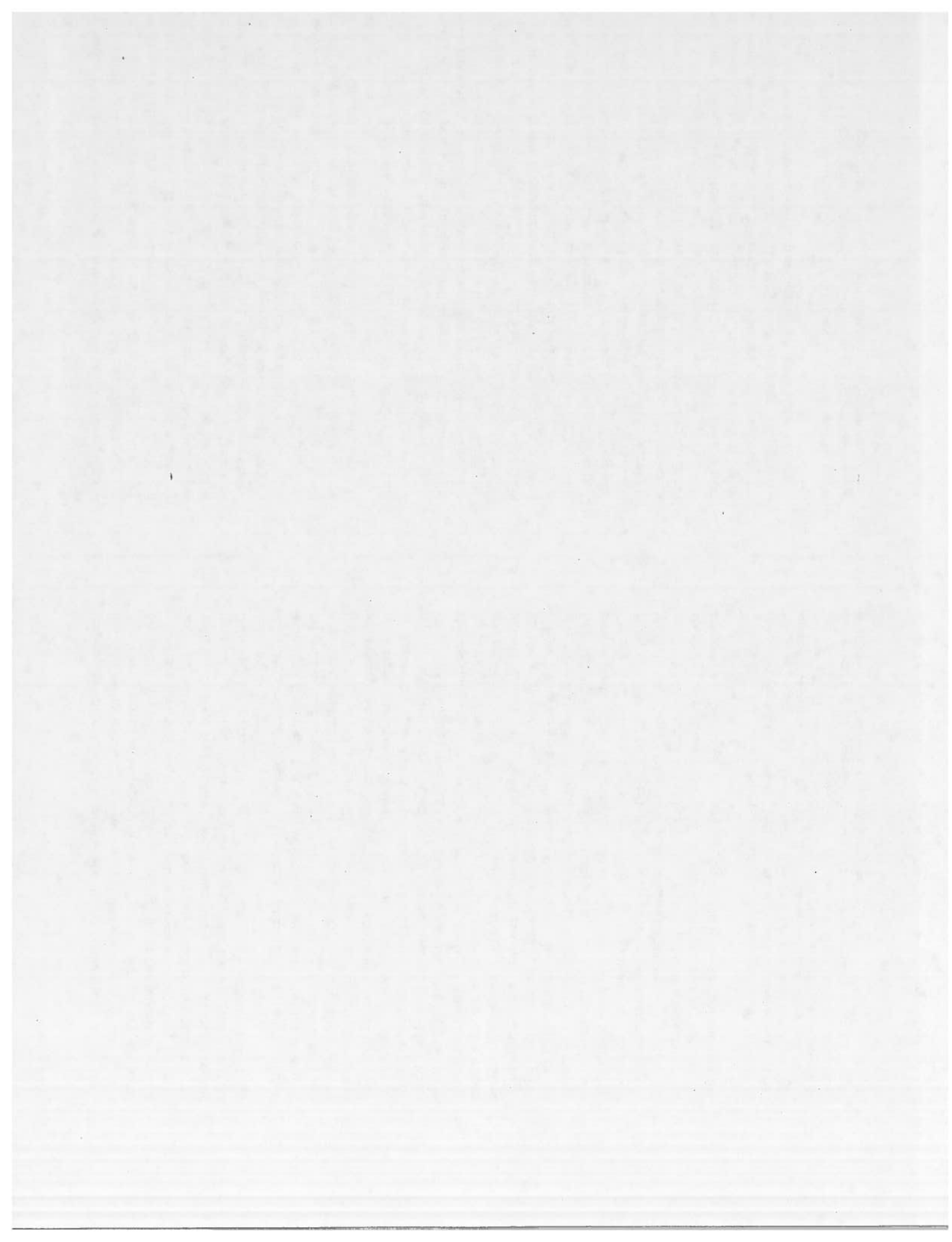
"All women by nature were either private or social mothers" (Morcillo Gómez 138), and the *Sección Femenina*'s supreme task was to endow Spain with mothers conscious of their proselytizing mission, or, at the very least, with subjects disposed to impart the acquired values since, according to Pilar Primo de Rivera, "cada mujer que salga de nuestras escuelas, además de haber difundido por las Secciones Femeninas la luz de nuestra verdad falangista, tendrá después unos hijos a los que podrá llenar el corazón y el entendimiento con el gozo de estas enseñanzas" ("each woman who leaves our schools, in addition to having spread the light of our Falangist truth through the *Secciones Femeninas*, will later have children whose hearts and understanding she will be able to fill with the joy of these teachings") (*Escritos* 251). The pedagogic purpose ascribed to mothers as a consequence of their normative formation, and espoused by the members of the *Sección Femenina* by dint of their official commitment to the exigencies of the state, sought once again to affirm women's role as agents of continuity and permanence through the ostensibly timeless values that they were expected to embody and impart. However, as we saw in the previous section, by the second half of the nineteenth century women had already begun to articulate the need in society for purportedly feminine qualities, thus extending their moral and didactic prerogative from the private to the public domain. Assuming the role of surrogate mothers, accomplished care-takers and preachers of virtue, they established the grounds and set a precedent from which the leaders of the *Sección Femenina* could legitimate their own direct participation in the process of nation-building.

The power disputed by and bestowed upon the *Sección Femenina* represented a mixed blessing for a revolutionary movement. The very conditions that entitled the organization to extend its influence over a wide sector of the

female population served to circumscribe the range and nature of its activities. The status of exemplary womanhood that the leaders of the *Sección Femenina* enjoyed as representatives of the state disciplinary apparatus demanded they not only disseminate but also adopt certain models of conduct and shun others; yet, as we shall see, their own lives were not easily reconcilable with either the image or the role they openly preached. Nevertheless, the visibility that the organization gained under the aegis of Franco's regime required that it align its activities with the interests of the new state even if the latter did not necessarily share *Sección Femenina*'s commitment to the Falangist doctrine.¹¹

What Joseantonian fascism and Francoist authoritarianism had in common were their totalitarian ambitions, wherein the ascendancy of the state over personal welfare was just one manifestation. Another was the desire for homogeneity, which facilitated control over national practices through the imposition of common, Manichean belief systems. Hence the aggregate function of formation in post-war Spain was tantamount to training by inculcation. One of its immediate objectives, albeit of long-term consequence, was the purging of Republican and other lay models of socialization, and their expedient replacement with national-Catholic moral order. According to Mary Nash, along with the established ideal of *ángel del hogar*, the 1910s and the 1920s saw the emergence of the so-called *nueva mujer moderna*, which "accommodated more restrictive gender roles toward the new needs of the labor market and society" (*Constructing Spanish Womanhood* 31-2). Kathleen Richmond likewise remarks on the diversity of available feminine models in the first decades of the twentieth century from the standpoint of the developing urban culture: "With the growth of towns and cities came new opportunities for leisure. Women had increasingly taken advantage of opportunities to emerge from their homes into more public social spheres such as the tea salon, the club or the big hotel where they would drink, smoke and dress fashionably. Cinema stars, often American, were public role models and with them their fashions and social mores" (9). If we consider a plurality of models or possible realizations for women as a sign of modernity, then the 1940s represented a considerable setback not only from the short Republican tenure, but as the above examples demonstrate, from the first three decades of the century. The nationalist discourse on womanhood suppressed these modern and modern-

11 On *Falange* and its absorption by the Nationalist Movement, see *Spanish Fascism in the Franco Era*. According to Elwood: "Whilst the *Falange* acted in the areas of its control as a vehicle for the power of the Franco regime, it should not be considered that the party was unilaterally instrumentalised by the regime. The relationship was, rather, one of mutual support and belief. In the same way that, in return for political inhibition or para-military services, the pre-war *Falange* had continuously sought the patronage or numerical strength of forces outside its own ranks, it now accepted the patronage of the Franco regime in return for an active contribution to the latter's consolidation and perpetuation" (59).



izing representations in favor of traditional bourgeois and religious models of *ángel del hogar* and *la perfecta casada*, the most revolutionary hegemonic alternative being that of a Falangist "new woman." Even so, as novelist Carmen Martín Gaité notes, and as the study of contemporaneous women's narratives will demonstrate, the former models of conduct, thought, and cultural expectations were not so easily erased:

Los chicos y chicas de postguerra, fuera cual fuera la ideología de sus padres, habían vivido una infancia de imágenes más movidas y heterogéneas, donde junto a la abuela con devocionario y mantilla de toda la vida, aparecía otra clase de mujeres, desde la miliciana hasta la "vamp", pasando por la investigadora que sale con una beca al extranjero y la que da mítines. Las habían visto retratadas en revistas, fumando con las piernas cruzadas, conduciendo un coche o mirando bacterias por un microscopio. Habían oído hablar de huelgas, de disputas en el Parlamento, de emancipación, de enseñanza laica, de divorcio; sabían que no todos los periódicos decían lo mismo, que no todas las personas pensaban lo mismo y también, claro está, que a uno cuando fuera mayor le sería posible elegir entre aquellas teorías distintas que hacían discutir tanto a la gente, y entre aquellos tipos de mujer, para imitarlo, si se era una niña, o, para casarse con ella, si se era un niño. Ahora esos estílos "viejos" se habían quedado para los países sin fe, donde soplaban, según expresión del Papa *un aire malsano de paganismo renacido*, que tendía a *engendrar e introducir una amplia paridad de las actividades de la mujer con las del hombre* [sic].

(Post-war boys and girls, whatever the ideology of their parents, had lived a childhood of more lively, heterogeneous images, where, next to the grandmother with her prayer book and perpetual mantilla, appeared other types of women, from the female soldier to the "vamp," not to mention the researcher who goes abroad with a grant and the woman who leads rallies. They had seen their pictures in magazines, smoking with their legs crossed, driving a car or looking at bacteria through a microscope. They had heard talk of strikes, of disputes in Parliament, of emancipation, of lay education, of divorce; they knew that not all the newspapers said the same thing, that not all people thought the same things and, also, it was obvious, that when they grew older it would be possible for them to choose among those different theories that made people argue so much, and among those types of women whom one was to imitate, if one was a girl, or marry, if one was a boy. Now those "old" types were only for the countries without faith, where, according to the Pope, "an unhealthy air of reborn paganism" blew, tending to "engender and produce a broad parity between the activities of women and men.") (*Usos amorosos* 26)

The memories of a heterogeneous past and awareness of an alternative present were measured against the national-Catholic social enterprise, which rendered common wellbeing a consequence of a common outlook.

De esta manera, conseguida una uniformidad de educación en todos los mandos femeninos de la Falange, puede decirse que en todas las familias españolas habrá desde la próxima generación una unidad de criterio y una sola manera de entender a España como fiel cumplidora de una empresa en lo universal. A cuya empresa habrán de doblegar todos los españoles los intereses de grupo o de clase.

(In this way, with a uniform education in all feminine ranks of the Falange having been achieved, one can say that in all Spanish families from the next generation on there will be a unity of criteria and one single way of understanding Spain as a nation that faithfully fulfills her role in the universal enterprise. To which enterprise all Spaniards will have to cede the interests of any group or class.) (*Primo de Rivera, Escritos* 251)

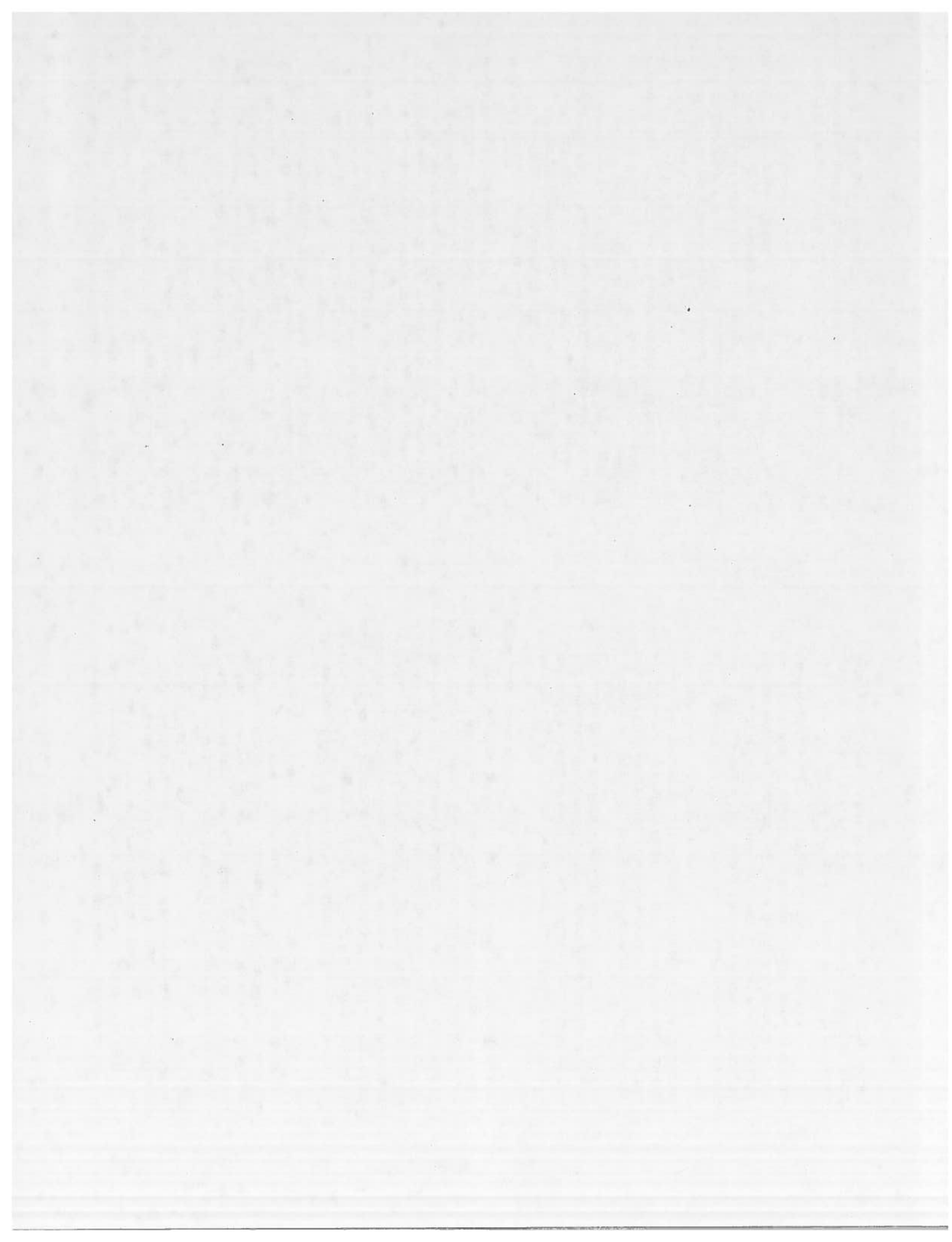
The purpose of female formation, as predicated by the women's section of the Falange, was the forging of national-Catholic female consciousness. As such, it promoted a "system of (partially or totally identical) schemes of perception, thought, appreciation and action," which would ensure the consolidation and perpetuation of the established order (Bourdieu, *Reproduction* 35). It was assumed, not without foundation, that the acquisition of legitimate dispositions placed one in optimal conditions to feel, act, and think within the confines of the permissible. The near identical content of the following passages serves, at the very least, to advance Susan Suleiman's notion of redundancy from being an indelible mark of authoritarian fictions to broader prescriptive practices:

Ya no habrá más que juventudes de miradas claras, educadas con la doctrina de Cristo y a nuestro modo nacional-sindicalista, que sabrán en cada momento qué es lo que les debe gustar y qué es lo que deben repeler como perjudicial para la ambición colectiva de la Patria.

(From now on, there will be only young people with clear vision, educated according to the doctrine of Christ and our national-syndicalist method, who will know at every moment what is it that they should like and what they should reject as detrimental to the collective ambition of the Fatherland.) (*Primo de Rivera, Cuatro discursos* 21)

[A] las mujeres de España hay que proporcionarles revolucionariamente unos conocimientos que hasta ahora desconocían y formarles una conciencia basada en la doctrina de Cristo y en nuestras normas nacional-sindicalistas, para que, sin deformaciones, sepan distinguir claramente en cada momento el bien del mal, tanto en materia religiosa como en el conocimiento que han de tener de la Patria, del hogar y de los hijos.

(We must provide the women of Spain, in revolutionary fashion, with the knowledge they have lacked up to now. Their consciences must be shaped within the doctrine of Christ and our national-syndicalist tenets, so that,



without wavering, at every moment they are able to clearly distinguish good from evil, both in religious matters and in the understanding they must have of the Fatherland, of home, and of children.) (Primo de Rivera, *Discursos* 67)

No perder ni minuto, ni hora, ni día en esta complicada misión de enseñar, que de toda esta prisa necesita la Patria para que ni una sola mujer escape a nuestra influencia y para que todas ellas sepan después, en cualquier circunstancia, reaccionar según nuestro entendimiento falangista de la vida y de la historia.

(We must not lose one minute, hour, or day in this complex mission of teaching; the Fatherland needs haste so that not a single woman escapes our influence, and so that all women know, afterward, in any situation, how to behave according to our Falangist understanding of life and history.)¹²

[L]o que hay que hacer con la juventud de hoy es procurar que adquiriera, como decía José Antonio, 'un sentido total claro en el alma que le dé las soluciones para lo concreto.' Este claro sentido, basado, naturalmente, en una auténtica formación religiosa y en este modo de ser que para nosotros es la Falange. Es decir, poner a las chicas en condiciones de que ellas mismas se guarden, mediante una sólida formación moral. Y después dejar que cada una desenvuelva su vida en el ambiente en que por su situación familiar le haya correspondido.

(What must be done with the young people of today is to insure that they acquire, as José Antonio used to say, 'a complete clarity in the soul that provides them with solutions for real problems.' This clarity [is] based, naturally, on an authentic religious upbringing, and on this way of life that is, for us, the Falange. In other words, we must create for girls conditions in which they will protect themselves by way of a solid moral foundation. Afterward, let each young woman carry out her life in the environment that corresponds to her family's station.) (Primo de Rivera, *Escritos* 258)

A widely exploited form of propagation was exemplarity. The *Sección Femenina's* first manifesto (1934) pronounced "'preaching, spreading the word and setting an example'" common functions of the affiliates (qtd in Richmond 34). All members were encouraged to serve as role models to those immediately under their command. In her address to the future *manitas* (leaders), Pilar stated: "La buena marcha de las Secciones Femeninas solo depende de vosotros, de la fe y la austeridad que las inculquéis con vuestro ejemplo. Si vosotros sois disciplinadas, también lo serán ellas, y os seguirán sin titubeos si ven que vuestra vida es exacta y justa" ("The progress of the *Secciones Femeninas* depends solely on you, on the faith and austerity that you instill in

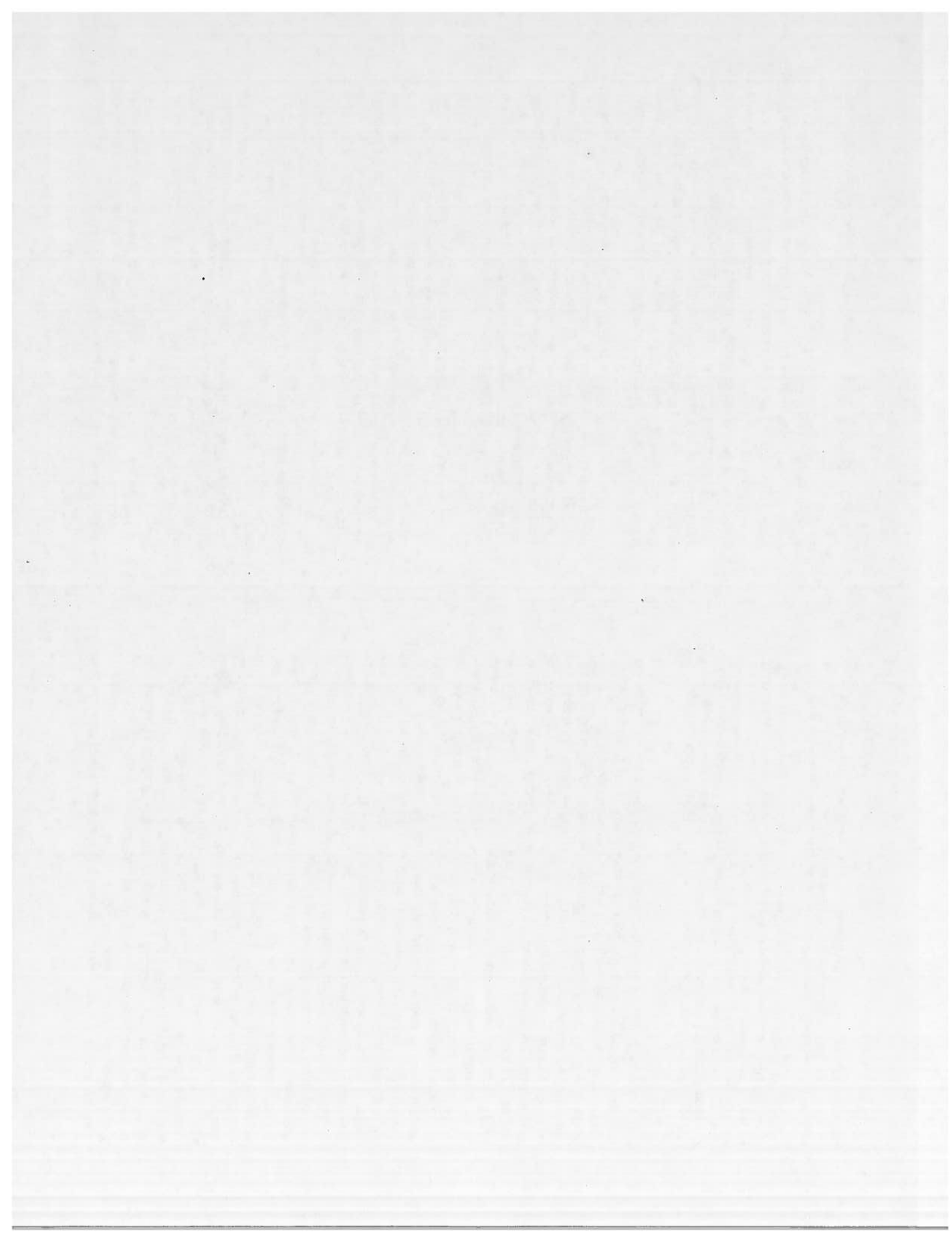
¹² From Y, the journal of *Sección Femenina*, April 1944. Qtd in Carmen Martín Gaité, *Usos amorosos* 59.

them through your example. If you are disciplined, they will be too, and they will follow you without hesitation if they see that your life is fair and just") (*Discursos* 11). In a similar vein, the edifying literature (from pamphlets to textbooks), published under the auspices of *Sección Femenina*, abounds in hagiographic accounts of religious martyrs and national heroes.¹³ Normative representations of Isabel the Catholic and St. Teresa of Ávila were emblematic of this trend.¹⁴ Since the 1930s, the two figures were employed as antidotes to the proliferating lay feminist movements. As Sunder Rajan contends elsewhere, the argument that "exceptional women of learning, or achievement, or military prowess" were not absent, in this case, from the valorized Spanish past, served to "undercut the need for an organized women's movement for achieving women's equality" (135). The consecration of given cultural figures as timeless role models of womanhood obfuscated the disparities between their historical and projected identities, thereby fomenting continuity between past and present on one hand, and encouraging emulation over change on the other.¹⁵ It was in the interests of the *Sección Femenina* to ensure that in fact both role models could be followed without posing a threat to the dominant patriarchal order. Hence the abundance of references to the queen's and the mystic's domestic proclivities, epitomized by their fondness for needlework. According to Giuliana Di Febo: "la frecuente configuración de Teresa e Isabel dedicadas a los 'labores de su sexo' funciona como *understatement* frente al excepcional protagonismo de ambas, relativizando su alcance y subyugando su coexistencia con específicos roles femeninos" ("the frequent depiction of Teresa and Isabel devoted to the 'labors of their sex' functions as an understatement vis-à-vis the exceptional protagonism of both, relativizing their achievements and highlighting their coexistence with specific feminine roles") (*Ritos de Guerra* 105). The emphasis on Isabel and Teresa's domesticity, in lieu of their public persona, had as its obvious corollary the displacement of female agency from the public to the private sphere. The recasting of authoritative feminine figures into "name protagonists" may be viewed as necessary for the legitimization of *Sección Femenina's* own

¹³ Such a climate was propitious for the production of reading formations understood as "a set of discursive and intertextual determinations that organize and animate the practice of reading, connecting texts and readers in specific relations to one another by constituting readers as reading subjects of particular types and texts as objects-to-be-read in particular ways." See Tony Bennett, "Texts in History: The Determinations of Readings and their Texts" in *Reception Study: From Literary Theory to Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 2001) 66, and the "Editor's introduction" to "Building the State and the Practice of Power 1940-1959," *Spanish Cultural Studies* 169.

¹⁴ Their homologation dates back to the seventeenth-century bishop Juan de Palafox y Mendoza. See Giuliana Di Febo, *La santa de la raza* (Barcelona: Icaria, 1987) 97.

¹⁵ See Giuliana Di Febo, *Ritos de Guerra y de Victoria* (Bilbao: Desclée de Brouwer, 2002) 94-5.



unconventional praxis.¹⁶ After all, "the SF's cadres were single, economically independent women with an unusually self-sufficient life-style"—a fact that allows Helen Graham to rightly conclude that—"[t]he discrepancy between this and the message they disseminated—of the virtues of female submission, subservience, and joy through domesticity—was remarkable" (193). Yet without this message there would have been no normative alternative to the status quo. If their lives formed an exception to the norm, it was because they assumed the role of its predictors.

Pilar's symbolic link with the original teachings of the Falange through her brother, José Antonio, served to bolster her, and through her, the organization's claims of expertise on the role and ideal of womanhood under the new order. As there was very little that José Antonio wrote or said about women, the oft-quoted passage below comes from his only recorded address to the members of the *Sección Femenina*. In it, he outlines the party's relationship toward women as situated between the opposite poles of retrograde and ultra-liberal models. Women as hailed by the Falange were to be neither passive heroines bent on frivolity, nor militant feminists and perceived victims of uneven competition with men.¹⁷

... acaso no sabéis toda la profunda afinidad que hay entre la mujer y la Falange. Ningún otro partido podréis entender mejor, precisamente porque en la Falange no acostumbramos a usar ni la galantería ni el feminismo.

¹⁶ According to Gallego Méndez: "... en Falange se amaba lo difícil y se convertían en dogmas de fe la disciplina y el sacrificio. Y en ello no iba a la zaga la Sección Femenina, cuyo comportamiento, acorde con esos valores, se medía a veces con el de los hombres, aludiendo al lema isabelino de 'Tanto monta...' Un ejemplo claro se encuentra en las palabras de Rosario Pereda: '... como la vuestra, acaso mayor que la vuestra a veces la de nuestras secciones femeninas, orgullosas de su inferioridad, tanto como de vuestro mando (grandes aplausos). Y si de sacrificio se habla, ¡ah! Entonces, entonces roto queda a nuestro favor el equilibrio del 'Tanto monta...' porque lo sacrificamos todo; y no una vida, no nuestra propia vida que tan poco vale, sino mil vidas, nuestras vidas, esas otras vidas de mujer que son vidas de hombre, vidas de hijos y de hermanos' (... in the Falange, what was difficult was loved, and discipline and sacrifice became dogmas of faith. And in this the *Sección Femenina* was not left behind, as its behavior, according to those values, was measured at times against that of men, alluding to the Isabeine motto 'tanto monta...' A clear example is found in the words of Rosario Pereda: '... like yours, at times perhaps greater than yours is that of our women's cadres, as proud of their inferiority, as of your leadership (loud applause). And if it is sacrifice that one speaks of, ah! Then, then the balance of 'tanto monta...' is in our favor because we sacrifice everything, and not merely one life, not our own life that is worth so little, but a thousand lives, our lives, those other lives of women that are men's lives, lives of sons and of brothers?': *Mujer, falange y franquismo* 31.

¹⁷ Since this passage is seldom quoted in its entirety (and using only part of the quotation alters its interpretation), I have chosen to reproduce it here almost in full, marking by asterisk the point from which it is commonly cited. A similar break with this obscuring trend may be found in Jo Labanyi's article, "Resemanticizing Feminine Surrender" 76.

La galantería no era otra cosa que una estafa para la mujer. Se la sobornaba con unos cuantos pippos, para arinconarla en una privación de todas las consideraciones serias. Se la distraía con un jarrabe de palabras, se la cultivaba una supuesta estúpida, para relegarla a un papel frívolo y decorativo. Nosotros sabemos hasta dónde cala la misión entrañable de la mujer, y nos guardaremos muy bien de tratarla nunca como tonta destinataria de pippos.

Tampoco somos feministas. *No entendemos que la manera de respetar a la mujer consista en sustraerla a su magnífico destino y entregarla a funciones varoniles. A mí siempre me ha dado tristeza ver a la mujer en ejercicios de hombre, toda afanada y desquiciada en una rivalidad donde lleva—entre la morbosa complacencia de los competidores masculinos—todas las de perder. El verdadero feminismo no debiera consistir en querer para las mujeres las funciones que hoy se estiman superiores, sino en rodear cada vez de mayor dignidad humana y social a las funciones femeninas.

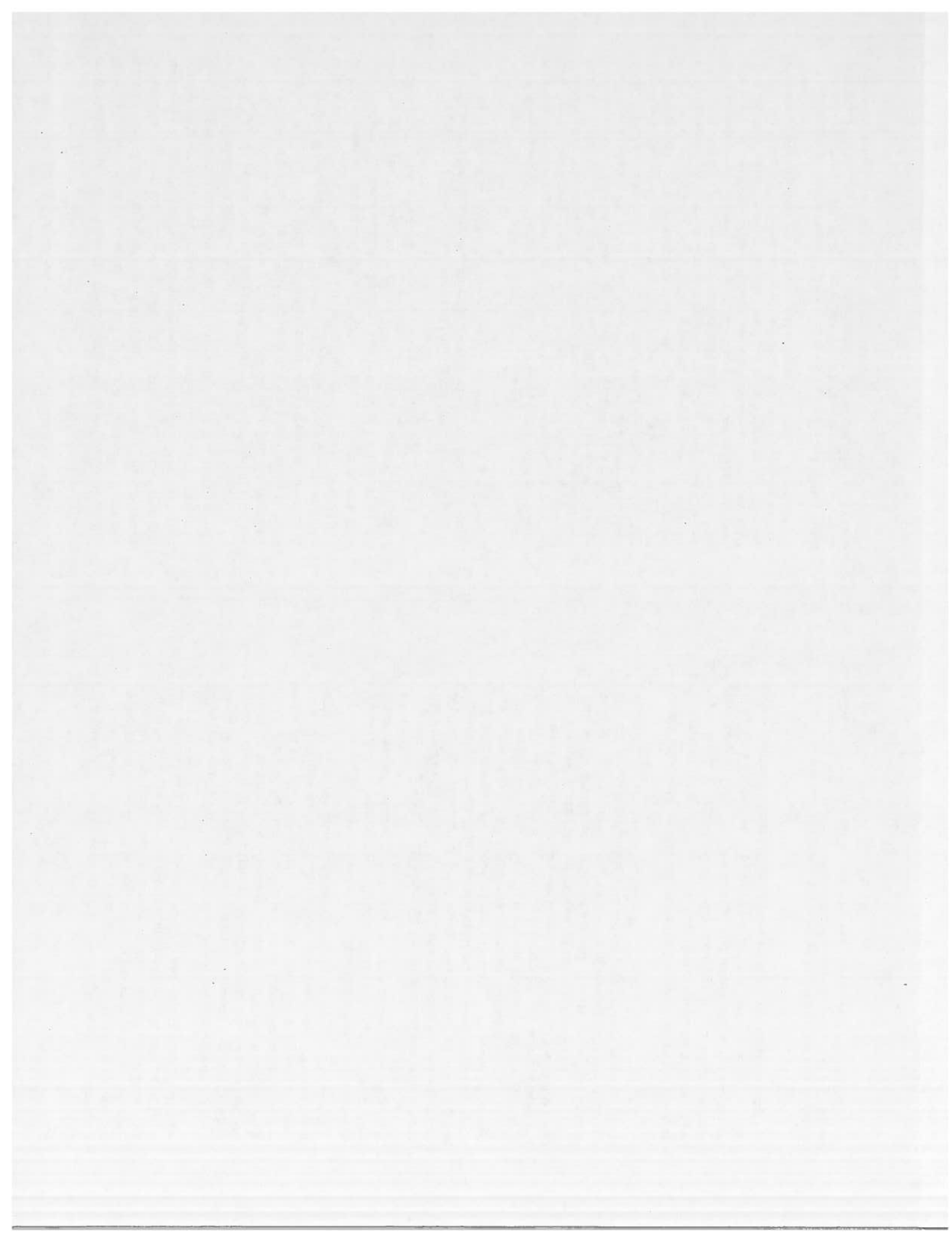
(... perhaps you are not aware of the profound affinity that exists between women and the Falange. You will not be able to understand any other party better, precisely because in the Falange we recur neither to gallantry nor to feminism.

Gallantry was nothing but a swindle for woman. She was bribed with a few compliments which were intended to marginalize her and deprive her of all serious consideration. She was distracted by a syrup of words, she was taught to appear stupid, in order to relegate her to a frivolous and decorative role. We know how far the true mission of woman extends, and we are very sure never to treat her as a foolish recipient of flattery.

We are not feminists, either. *It is not our understanding that the way to respect woman consists in diverting her from her magnificent destiny and delivering her over to masculine functions. It has always saddened me to see a woman doing man's work, harried and at her wits' end in a rivalry that—to the morbid satisfaction of her male competitors—she is destined to lose. True feminism should not consist of wanting for women functions that are seen as superior today, but instead in giving ever more human and social dignity to feminine functions.)¹⁸

This speech provided the groundwork for the *Sección Femenina*'s self-representation as it strove to differentiate its own ideal of womanhood from romantic, liberal, religious, feminist, and intellectual types. It rejected the "hoñería" or spinelessness of the first, the atheism and immorality of the second, the false piety, backwardness, and hypocrisy of the third, and the perceived sterility, androgyny, and disregard for paramount feminine virtues of the latter two.

¹⁸ See "Palabras pronunciadas por José Antonio en Don Benito (Badajoz), después del mitin, a unas camaradas," *Obras completas de José Antonio Primo de Rivera* (N.p.: Delegación Nacional de Prensa y Propaganda de Falange Española Tradicionalista y de las J.O.N.S., n.d.) 167-8.



Instead, the organization fomented "an ideal of femininity that would place women above criticism, allowing them to be educationally and professionally fulfilled and yet not a challenge to male authority" (Richmond 10). The materialization of such an ideal required the production of a public field in which women could act without overt reference to men (Richmond 108), and for which the organization drew on the nineteenth-century bourgeois discourse of different and complementary gender relations—the foundational basis of its statutes.

Chapter one of the aforementioned document defined women's, and subsequently *Sección Femenina's*, role in the following terms:

El fin esencial de la mujer, en su función humana, es servir de perfecto complemento al hombre, formando con él, individual o colectivamente, una perfecta unidad social.

Por lo tanto, la Sección Femenina de Falange Española de las J.O.N.S., al incorporarse con misión, sentido y estilo netamente femeninos a la obra viril de la Falange, lo hará para auxiliar, complementar y hacer total aquella obra.

(The essential destiny of woman, in her human function, is to serve as a perfect complement to man, forming with him, individually or collectively, a perfect social union.

Therefore, the *Sección Femenina* of the Spanish Falange of the J.O.N.S. will join in the virile work of the Falange through a purely feminine mission, sensibility and style, so as to help, complement and complete that work.)

Article 4 of this same chapter pronounced the women's task within the organization to be:

la realización de todos los servicios que concuerden exactamente con el espíritu y facultades de sus masas, cumpliendo con ello en la Falange las funciones de la mujer en el hogar—arreglo material, aliento y cuidado—y de otra parte los servicios extraordinarios de participación en la obra sanitaria y desarrollo de la obra social benéfica....

(carrying out all the services that conform exactly with the spirit and capabilities of its members, and thereby fulfilling in the Falange woman's domestic duties—material upkeep, support, and care—and in addition, the extraordinary services of participating in sanitary work and the development of charitable social work....)

Finally, article 6 promised to maintain the male-female division of roles through the observance of a distinct style and mode of conduct that was intended to denote Falangist women's inherent femininity: "Para cumplir todas sus fines, la Sección Femenina... fijará a la mujer en el íntegro y pleno

sentido del ser femenina, según es por naturaleza inabdicable, apartándola en la conducta, la forma y el estilo de toda función o apariencia varonil" ("In order to achieve all of its goals, *Sección Femenina*... will confirm in women their full and integral femininity, which is by nature unrenounceable, by removing them in conduct, form, and style from all male functions or appearances") (qtd in Gallego Méndez 216).

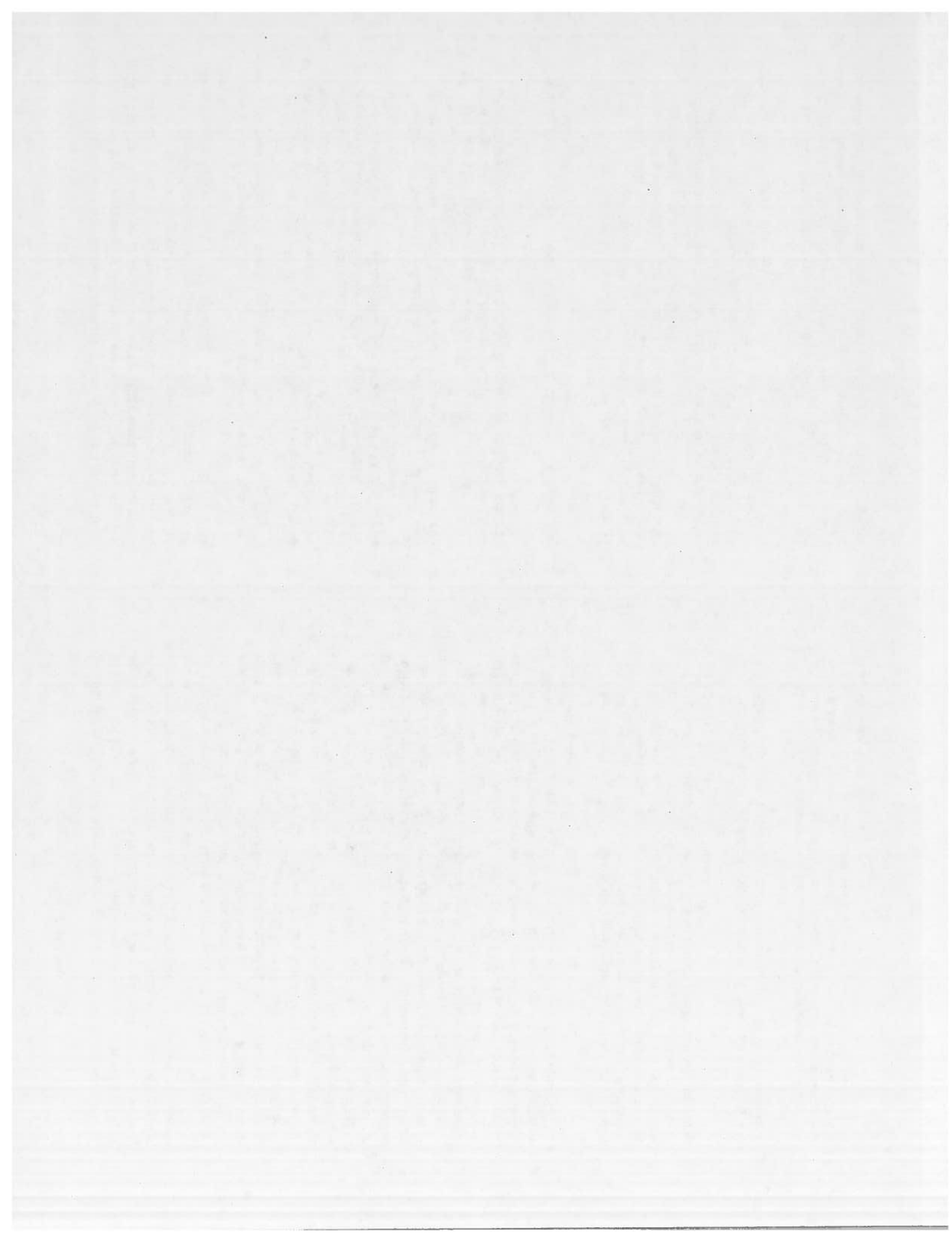
The two channels through which the organization could legitimately assert its influence were education and welfare programs. Both demanded that the *mandos* or the heads of women's cadres lead a lifestyle that differed substantially from the one promoted by the organization. As Richmond observes, "they had to be flexible professionals, able to cope with varied responsibilities and prepared to live and work away from home. Most, although not all, stayed single, challenging the stereotype of the unmarried woman as an object of pity" (12). This apparent deviation from the norm nonetheless enjoyed a normative interpretation whereby the women in question were considered to be sacrificing their personal happiness for service to the Fatherland and for the good of society at large. As such, the Falangist women made a case for social rather than biological motherhood. Offering a homology with Catholic nuns, the Falangist women were wedded to the national-syndicalist vision of a new state, which it was their duty to serve and uphold.

Thus, contrary to what might be expected, women's leadership roles made available by the *Sección Femenina* were founded on the very discourse that relegated them to a separate and subordinate field of action. We may further contend that one of the *Sección Femenina's* most striking accomplishments was the reconfiguring of difference from a disabling into an enabling category for women. Whether this was done in a spirit of defiance or compliance, the fact remains that:

for its members and particularly the elites (*mandos*), SF gave opportunities for a way of life that was rare in the Franco regime before the 1960s, when the development of mass tourism heralded social and economic changes for Spanish women. Prior to that, for the majority of women, the goal of marriage, children and domesticity remained uncontested.... The activities of the *mandos*, on the other hand, allowed certain freedoms while remaining publicly acceptable. (Richmond 101)¹⁹

As we have seen, the underlying stipulation of women's changing life script was that it alleviate the material and welfare needs of the new state

¹⁹ In her study on women under Italian fascism, Victoria De Grazia asserts that women were not passive subjects but protagonists who made choices, "although how they negotiated these choices is harder to document than the fact that they made them, for the preponderance of written sources echo male anxieties rather than voice women's concerns." *How Fascism Ruled Women* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1993) 11.



without in any way perturbing the established order, a stipulation that permeated *Sección Femenina's* discourse at every level. The initial challenge of creating a space for female agency without undermining or threatening male authority came to define the organization's rhetoric and praxis. Because some practices were more useful than others in promoting the national-Catholic feminine ideal, and contained potential for "misinterpretation," their injunction as a rule came with a mandatory interpretation.²⁰

As one compulsory text for future instructors of the *Sección Femenina's* domestic schools averred, women's individual formation and professional initiation consisted "no en instruir intelectualmente a la mujer . . . sino en que aprenda en la escuela aquellos conocimientos que le son imprescindibles para su actuación en la familia" ("not in the intellectual instruction of women . . . but in ensuring that they learn in school all those things which are indispensable for their performance in the family"). Similarly, political formation to raise female awareness of national concerns and interests was intended "no para discutirlos, sino para poder infundirlos en el corazón de los hijos y hacer de este modo que un verdadero patriotismo informe toda la vida española" ("not to debate them, but to be able to instill them into the hearts of their children, and in this way ensure that true patriotism inform all Spanish life") (qtd. in Pastor i Homs 60-1). The above use of the negative construction bespeaks the perceived need to limit the gap between desired and alternative ends of the endorsed training, which is in turn indicative of the organization's latent anxiety about the reception of its teachings both by the state (for whom the inclusion of normative interpretation into the injunction was a means of preempting criticism) and by their female addressees (in whom this same mechanism sought to curb the authority for making contesting interpretations). Implicit in these discursive practices were inconsistencies between realizations of prescribed tenets and their univocal rationalization. It was the latter that imbued given practices with a normative content, and it was in the ensuing gap between their authorized and censored interpretations where the institutional discourse was unsettled as an ultimate and unambiguous source of meaning.

What any new welfare, social or educational program needed as a precondition for its successful implementation was a command of legitimate and legitimating rhetoric and an observable compliance with the status quo. Rendered as subservient to state-sanctioned objectives, female formation—

²⁰ It is not incidental that the practice of inscribing meaning in the text to safeguard its "correct" interpretation (which Subletian identifies as a distinctive feature of authoritarian fictions) is exercised when the discourse on womanhood treats functions that stand out for their potential multivalence and as such threaten the tight web of meanings that constitute Spanish womanhood. This may also account for sublimation as a recurrent strategy in women's writing (in either manuals and handbooks or narratives of female exemplarity).

whether it addressed the question of hygiene, morality, beauty, or learning—could not stand as an end entirely on its own. Among the potential points of contest were the *Sección Femenina's* advocacy of female instruction, employment, and sports. In and of themselves, none of the above was considered indispensable for the fulfillment of the female mission of marrying, bearing and raising children. Instead, all three were endorsed and legitimized as means to this desired, hegemonic end. Consider the following passage from the "Discurso de la Excmo. Sra. D^a Pilar Primo de Rivera y Saenz de Heredia" quoted by Morcillo Gómez:

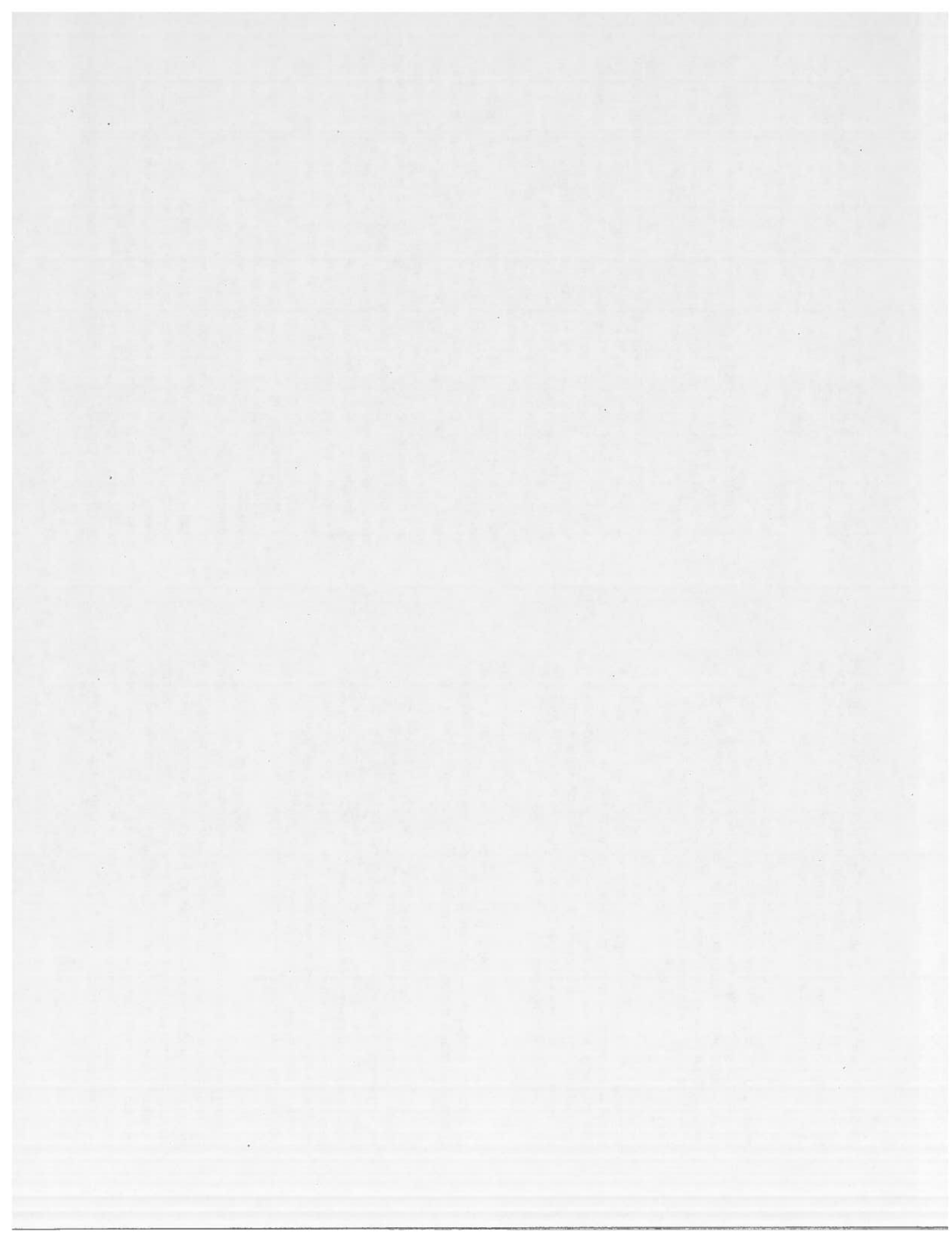
We are convinced that by protecting women's access to work and learning, we do not violate the laws. An educated, refined, and sensitive woman—precisely for that reason—is a better educator of her children and a better companion for her husband. In the Women's Section, we have thousands of cases of university women who are married and whose families are a model of compassion and harmony. According to José Antonio, a woman cannot limit herself to being a 'foolish recipient of compliments.' Abnegation, her essential virtue, is much more consciously and efficiently developed if she has an education." (*True Catholic Womanhood* 69)

But Pilar's argument did not stop here. An educated woman was able to play a greater role in the instruction of her children and enjoy the status of "amiga y mujer" ("friend and wife") rather than simply "mujer" (wife, or woman) so long as:

no se trate de ponerse en un plan de igualdad con el hombre que eso es pedante, ridículo y camino seguro del fracaso como mujer. . . . Ahora, si la cultura se lleva hasta el punto de que la mujer se queda en un árido producto intelectual, sin una sola de las condiciones humanas que debe tener para alcanzar sus fines naturales, entonces la cultura es totalmente negativa; pero, gracias a Dios, en España no suele darse ese tipo de mujer puramente intelectual.

(there is no question of putting her on an equal plane with man, since that is pompous, ridiculous and a sure road to failure as a woman. . . . Now, if the culture reaches a point in which woman is left as an arid intellectual product, without a single one of the human conditions that she must have to fulfill her natural destiny, then the culture is totally negative; but, thank God, in Spain that type of purely intellectual woman does not come about very often.) (Primo de Rivera, *Escritos* 259)

In a similar vein, while it helped restore women to their natural purview (jeopardized by the changing expectations of lay and materialist cultures), the *Sección Femenina* both acknowledged and sanctioned the need for feminine labor through its serial publications. According to one such publication, mid-



dle-class women "could aspire to become nurses, language teachers, secretaries, librarians, research assistants, opticians, tourist guides, and even international bureaucrats" whereas women from the working classes could become qualified "cooks, maids, nannies, or hairdressers" (Morcillo Gómez, *True Catholic Womanhood* 74). The legitimating basis for this institutionally unauthorized stance was what De Grazia calls "ideology of scarcity," an upshot of extreme penury and economic uncertainty wrought by the Civil and the Second World Wars. Consequently, work for women was permissible, but unlike for men, it was conceived as a temporary measure rather than a norm.²¹ According to Richmond, the member of *Sección Femenina* gave labor a culturally accepted vanish of service. The wages were either non-existent or so low as to pass for tokens of appreciation rather than due recompense. Instead, much of the work was done on a voluntary basis, pre-empting charges of self-interest, greed, or feminism that were commonplace against female paid labor. Normative rationalization for a working woman was that she complied with her familial obligations by contributing to the waning domestic economy. Conversely, the *Sección Femenina*'s promotion of voluntary service afforded its leaders a kind of distinction in keeping with "bourgeois opinion which equated paid work with need and preferred to see middle-class women in voluntary activities for church and country" (Richmond 106-7).

As for sports, according to the official rhetoric of the time, a woman who engaged in them did so to enhance her femininity and strengthen her health, both of which had positive repercussions in her wifely and motherly duties. Following De Grazia:

Pastimes such as skiing, tennis, swimming, horseback riding, or sailing were like piano playing for nineteenth-century bourgeois young women; they enhanced social grace, offered occasions to meet eligible young men, and were part of a common modern upper-class style of life, one shared by the royal young women of the House of Savoy as well as by the new fascist bourgeoisie. (220)

Feminization of sports or their incorporation into middle-class feminine aesthetics is manifest in popular romance novels of the time whose protagonists are at once agile and frail, spirited and vulnerable, tenacious and graceful, accomplished yet uncompetitive. The vigilance of the Church and the ensuing moral order ensured that women's dress code did not compromise the stringent sexual mores, even in the water. Competition was eliminated from sports as a "masculine element," just as certain careers remained inaccessible to women both in study and practice. Even so, for the clergy and moralists,

21. Anyone interested to learn more about the subject should consult the cited works by Richmond and Morcillo Gómez. My own analysis is much indebted to their contribution.

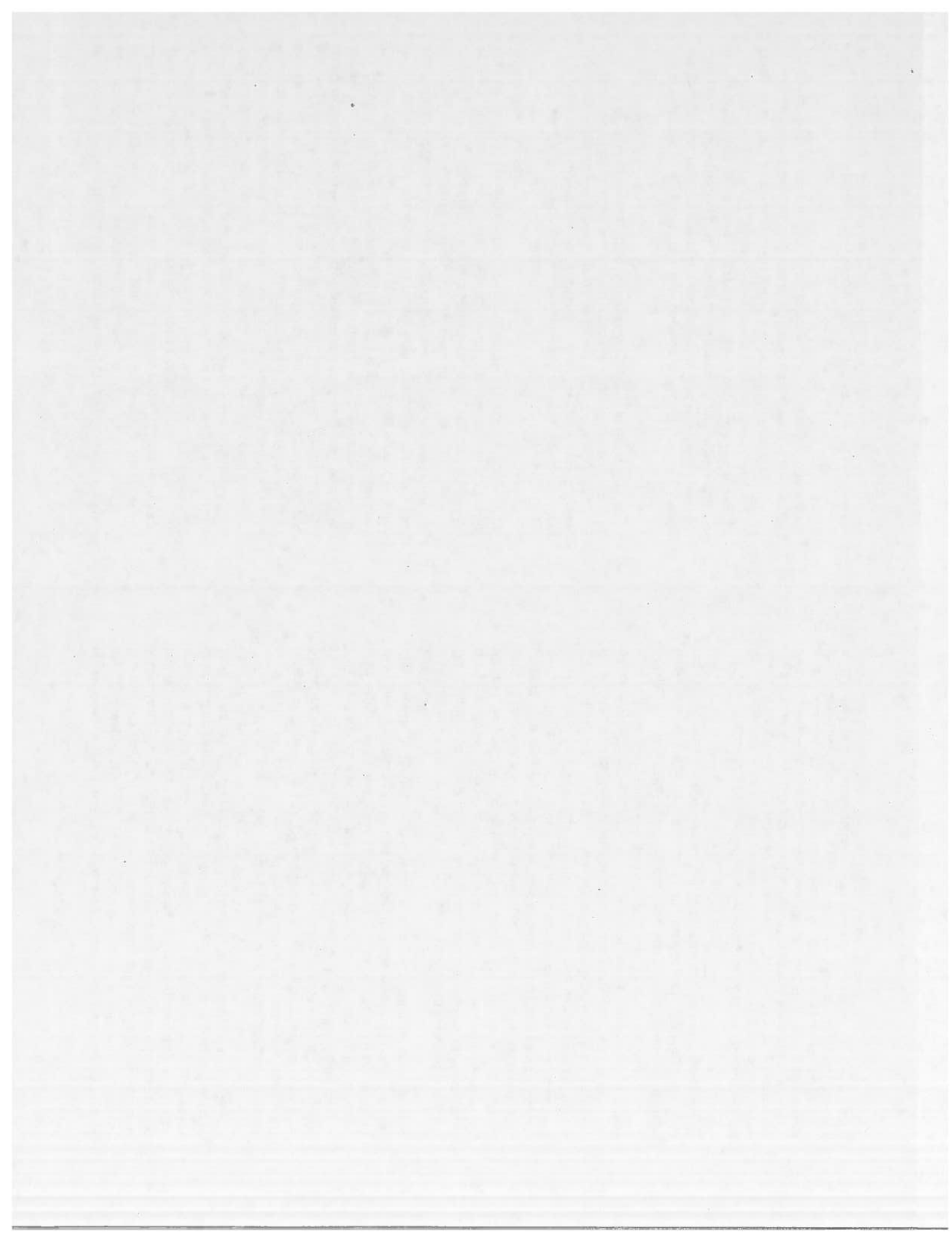
physical education was a controversial practice,²² as were the pursuits of higher education and career goals, which threatened to undermine the institution of marriage and to empower women intellectually, socially, and economically, thereby jeopardizing male supremacy in both the domestic and public realms. A woman who considered learning and employment a source of personal gain and fulfillment was ostensibly betraying her very nature, which exacted abnegation—"todo lo contrario del egoísmo, de la comodidad, de lo fácil" ("the complete opposite of selfishness, of comfort, of that which is easy") (Primo de Rivera, *Escritos* 249).

But for the representatives of more conservative circles, the gravest threat to the feminine psyche throughout the 1940s was the post-war climate itself (owing to the relaxation of the conservative status quo before the consolidation of the national-Catholic mores—a recurring motif in women's contemporaneous narratives). The imposition of order and discipline hailed by the Falange therefore was seen as a positive measure aimed, among other things, at securing resolve and restoring premises shaken by war and deprivation. In this respect, watching films and reading literature warranted particular caution, especially for those who were in want of a solid national-Catholic foundation.

As Richmond observes, the party's trans-class aspirations and bourgeois underpinnings were manifest in the organization's promotion of meritocracy; that is, while its leaders constituted a select minority (in line with Joseantonian dictum), in principle, acceptance of Falangist doctrine enabled anyone to excel in the spirit of service and sacrifice, regardless of his or her social provenance: "Tenemos que meterles tan dentro de sí este espíritu nuestro, que lleguen a olvidarse de su procedencia, que sientan el orgullo de ser españoles con la misma fuerza con que nosotros lo sentimos, y que ya entre sus hijos y los nuestros no perciban diferencia alguna" ("We have to instill our spirit in them so deeply, that they forget where they came from, that they feel the pride of being Spanish as strongly as we do, and that there be no perceptible difference between their children and ours") (Primo de Rivera, *Discursos* 21).

One way to a "classless," harmonious, and unified Spain was through homogeneous formation. Realization of a similar goal (totalizing formation) required a complex educational and propagandistic network comprised of

22. According to one of the former affiliates: "when they [the members of *Sección Femenina*] introduced gymnastics for girls into the schools, it was considered very 'provocative,' and the mothers of the girls wouldn't let them put on bloomers. . . . Now, you hear those bloomers being laughed at, and they say, 'How ridiculous' [they were]." At the time, however, these activities of the *Sección Femenina* ran counter to established Church norms. "There were bishops who did not look at us with a kind eye; they would even say to us that we were perverting the youth. . . . Even I had to experience on one occasion that a priest, who had confessed me, said that if I did not leave the *Sección Femenina*, that my soul was in danger. . . . Certainly, I didn't ever return to confess with that man." Qtd in Lorté Endera, "Problematic Portraits," 384.



theoretical and practical training, specialized schools and literacy centers, camps and mobile institutes, and compulsory women's Social Service (*servicio social*). An equivalent of men's obligatory military service, it had been initiated as a wartime auxiliary measure and graduated into a form of social control and assistance (and, through Carmen Martín Gaité's prose, may be one of the *Sección Femenina*'s most popularized measures in the shaping of Spanish womanhood). Its two components, theory and practice, matched its twofold objective of providing the state's ailing economy with free labor, and of regulating the female sector of the population. "Every woman who desired state employment, a passport, a driver's license, or even a fishing license passed through the six months required social service of the SF: in fact, the Women's Section affected—negatively or positively—a large majority of two generations of Spanish females" (Enders 676). Social Service thus became a prime vehicle through which *Sección Femenina* carried out its mission of reeducating and preparing women for the New Spain.

A considerable role in the *Sección Femenina*'s self-representation was awarded to faith in the party's doctrine:

La fe mueve los montes. Tened fe, y todo lo demás os dará por añadidura. Dice José Antonio que lo que hace falta es encontrar la verdad, creer en ella e imponerla como él nos decía también: alegremente, poéticamente, y quizá en buscar la dificultad del riesgo está en parte la poesía de la Falange y mucha de nuestra alegría.

(Faith moves mountains. Have faith, and all the rest will be given to you. José Antonio says that what is needed is to find the truth, believe in it and impose it—as he also said to us—happily, poetically, and perhaps much of our happiness and part of the poetry of the Falange consists in seeking the challenge, taking the risk.)

Conceived as acts of faith, Falangist women's activities could inspire no considerable criticism, only an understandable degree of incomprehension: "En nuestra misma Sección Femenina vemos cómo la camarada divulgadora deja pasar todo lo que para ella signifique comodidad o agrado y voluntariamente se lanza a lo difícil, a lo que los sensatos llaman absurdo" ("In our own *Sección Femenina*, we see how the comrade-propagandist plunges into that which for her means comfort or pleasure and voluntarily plunges into that which is difficult, into what sensible people call absurd") (Primo de Rivera, *Escritos* 249–50). One may find this same logic operating in the novels of Carmen de Icaza, an honorary member of the *Sección Femenina* whose protagonists are distinguished for their resolve and tenacity, qualities that as a rule have not been associated with the traditional patriarchal model of womanhood.

To complete our analysis of the Falangist feminine ideal, we must now turn to Emilio Gentile's notion of fascism as a political religion. The legiti-

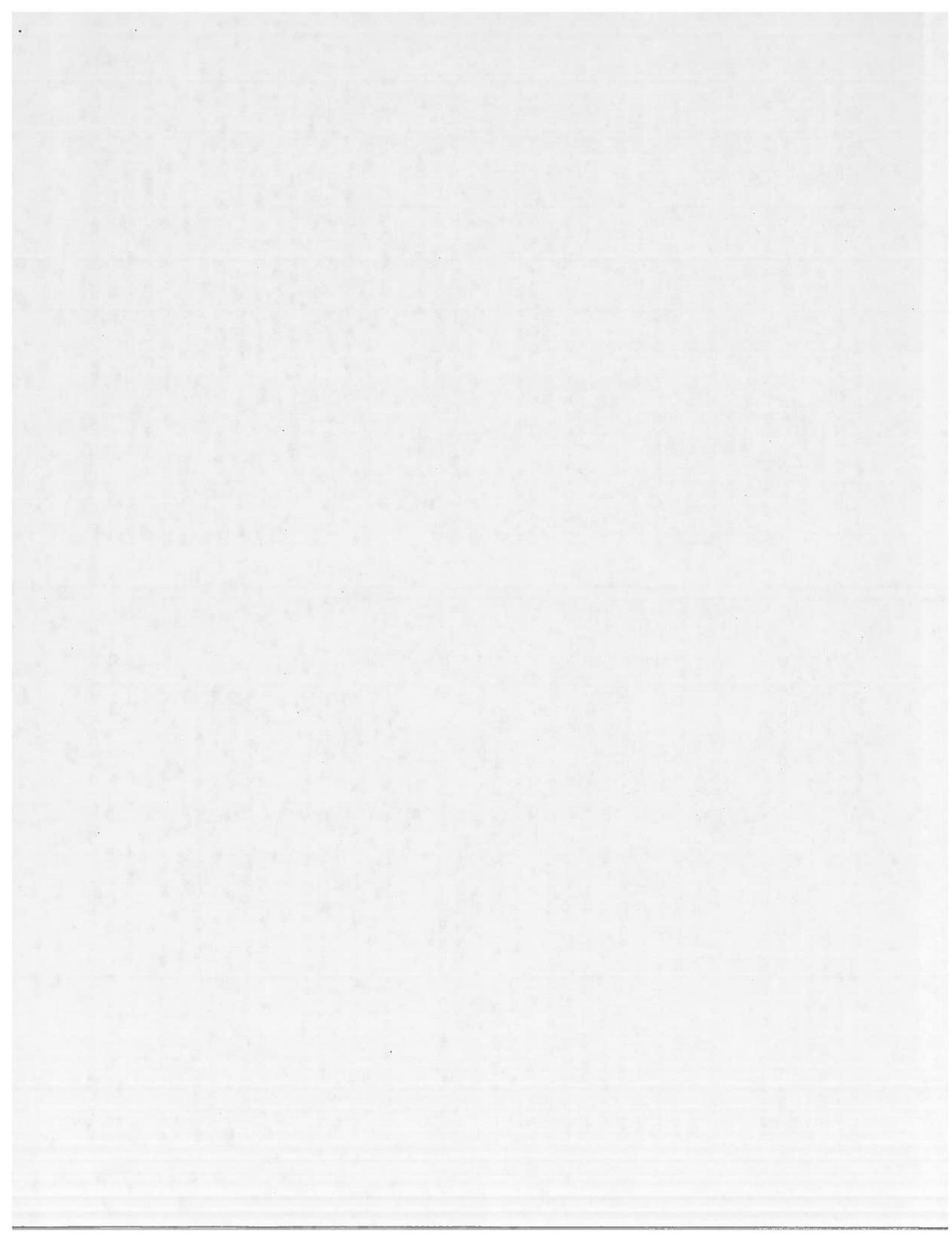
matine role played by the Catholic Church in the consolidation of the Francoist regime has precluded, in my view, the study of Falange as a civic religion in the vein of Italian fascism. According to Gentile:

Se puede hablar de sacralización de la política cuando una entidad política, por ejemplo la Nación, el Estado, la Raza, la Clase, el Partido, el Movimiento, se transforma en una entidad sagrada, es decir, trascendente, indiscutible, intangible y, como tal, se convierte en el eje de un sistema, más o menos elaborado, de creencias, mitos, valores, mandamientos, ritos y símbolos, transformándose así en objeto de fe, de reverencia, de culto, de fidelidad y entrega para los ciudadanos hasta el sacrificio de la vida, si fuera necesario.

(It is possible to talk of sacralization of politics when a political entity (e.g., the Nation, State, Race, Class, Party, Movement) is transformed into a sacred entity (i.e., transcendent, indisputable, intangible), and as such becomes the axis of a more or less complex system of beliefs, myths, values, commandments, rites and symbols, thus turning into an object of faith, reverence, worship, devotion and submission for citizens, even to the point of sacrificing their lives, should it be necessary.) (57)

The notion of the Falange as a civic religion provides an interesting angle for the study of the totalitarian and totalizing ambition of the party, which sought to imbue all human activity with a sense of cohesion and purpose in keeping with its own mandates. For a true Falangist there was no meaning outside of the Falange. Those who wished to join its ranks were considered to be at the brink of a new life. Predictably, such a life entailed surrender of one's will, renunciation of former ways, and tempering of all instincts that threatened to compromise the truths represented by the Falange: "Y al darnos cuenta de que habíamos encontrado la verdad amorosamente nos pusimos a servirla, dejando atrás y como olvidada nuestra inútil vida anterior" ("And realizing that we had found the truth, we lovingly dedicated ourselves to its service, leaving our useless previous life behind, as if forgotten") (Primo de Rivera, *Escritos* 247). In a pledge that marked the passage from an old and meaningless existence to one full of promise, the future affiliates of the *Sección Femenina* swore to display obedience, enthusiasm, zeal, patience, valor, silence, resilience, integrity, and dedication.²³ These were but some of the qualities that

²³ The following was the pledge taken upon initiation into the ranks of *Sección Femenina*: "Juro daros siempre al Servicio de Falange. Juro no tener otro orgullo que el de la Patria y el de la Falange y vivir siempre bajo la Falange en obediencia y alegría, ímpetu y paciencia, gallardía y silencio. Juro lealtad y sumisión a nuestros Jefes, honor a la memoria de nuestros muertos, implacable perseverancia en todas las vicisitudes. Juro dondequiera que esté para obedecer, o para mandar, respeto a nuestras Jerarquías, del primero al último cargo. Juro rechazar y dar por no oída toda voz del enemigo, que pueda debilitar el espíritu de Falange. Juro mantener sobre



constituted the Falangist ideal type. As José Antonio Primo de Rivera claimed, and Pilar Primo de Rivera liked to remind her followers, the Falange was, above all, a way of life:

Dijo José Antonio el 29 de octubre: 'Que nuestro Movimiento no estaría del todo entendido si se creyera que era una manera de pensar tan solo; no es una manera de pensar, es una manera de ser. No debemos proponernos sólo la construcción, la arquitectura política. Tenemos que adoptar ante la vida entera, en cada uno de nuestros actos una actitud humana, profunda y completa. Esa actitud es el espíritu de servicio y de sacrificio, el sentido ascético y militar de la vida.'

(José Antonio said on October 29: 'Our Movement would not be fully understood if one were to regard it as only a way of thinking; it is not a way of thinking, it is a way of being. We should not only aspire to construct the framework, the political architecture. We have to adopt in our entire life, in each one of our acts, a humane, profound, and complete attitude. That attitude is the spirit of service and sacrifice, the ascetic and military way of life.') (*Cuatro discursos* 31)

It was this attitude toward life that distinguished a true Falangist from a mere affiliate as well as from other normative types. Characterized by gravity of manner, defiance of obstacles, and unyielding optimism, it denoted faith in the party's transcendental purpose, in its dream of national revival. Its materialization was the task of a select few, who in José Antonio's words constituted "una minoría inasequible al desaliento" ("a minority impervious to despair");²⁴ hence, the optimism, or "alegría," that necessarily permeated all Falangist activities from service to sacrifice.

The acceptance of the Falange's palingenetic mission—which enabled the members of the party to live, serve, fight, and die in voluntary submission to its doctrine—therefore presupposed more than training, a conversion. The by-

todas las ideas de Unidad. Unidad entre las tierras de España. Unidad en el hombre y entre los hombres de España. Juro vivir en santa hermandad con todos los de la Falange y prestar todo auxilio y depurar toda diferencia, siempre que me sea invocada esta santa hermandad." ("I swear always to put myself at the service of the Falange. I swear not to have any other pride than that of the Fatherland and that of the Falange and to live always under the Falange in obedience and happiness, urgency and patience, magnanimity and silence. I swear loyalty and submission to our leaders, honor to the memory of our dead, impeccable perseverance through all vicissitudes. Whenever I may be, whether to obey or to lead, I swear respect to our Hierarchy, from the highest to the lowest official. I swear to reject and turn a deaf ear to the enemy's voice, as that could debilitate the spirit of the Falange. I swear to maintain above all the idea of Unity. Unity among the lands of Spain. Unity in each man and among the men of Spain. I swear to live in holy brotherhood with all those of the Falange and lend all aid and put aside all differences, whenever this holy brotherhood is invoked."); Pilar Primo de Rivera, *Cuatro discursos* 14.

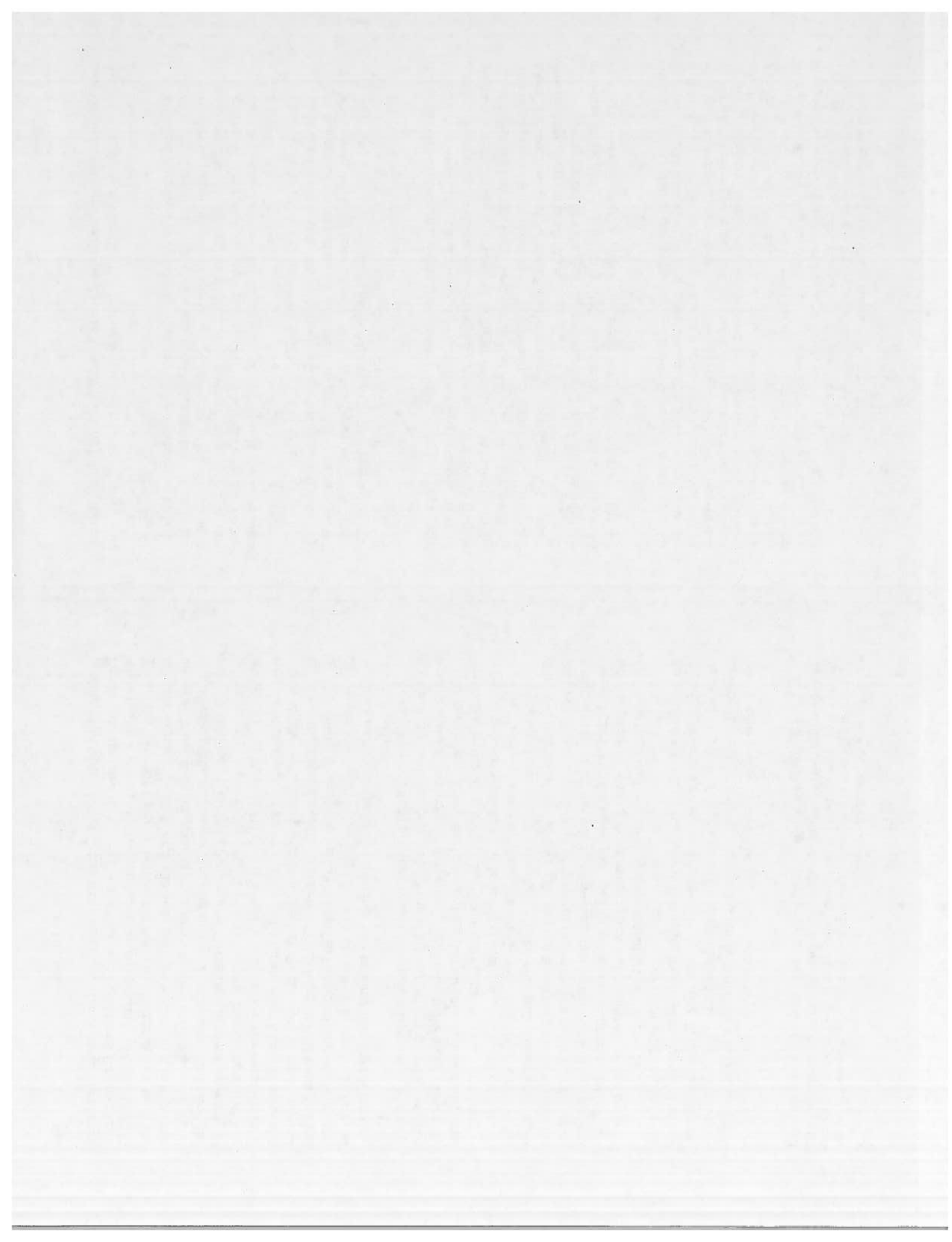
²⁴ Quid in Pilar Primo de Rivera, *Cuatro discursos* 20.

product of the party's belief system was a new man, who, according to Stanley Payne, "incorporated nearly all the qualities of the traditional Catholic hero, while fusing it with certain twentieth-century components" (*Franco* 58-9).²⁵ Yet unlike those of Catholic heroes and heroines, Falangist acts were not inspired so much by traditional Christian faith as by faith in a palingenetic vision of "the nation rising phoenix-like from the ashes of decadence" (Griffin xii). Hence, while there is no denying that as a nationalist movement, the Falange embraced Spanish Catholicism (as Payne further points out, many of its members were practicing Catholics (*Franco* 259)), I subscribe to Kathleen Richmond and Victoria De Grazia's view that the study of a Falangist ideal type, or at least that of an ideal Falangist woman, must take into account a "deep conflict within the fascist state between the demands of modernity and the desire to reimpose traditional authority" (De Grazia 2; Richmond 5). Even as they upheld conservative Catholic values and bourgeois mores, the leaders of the *Sección Femenina* rejected the role of passive bystander in favor of women's mobilization and incorporation into national life through the state political body.

We may thus conclude that the *Sección Femenina*'s task was to adapt the notion of the new 'Falangist man' "who is instinctively prepared to sacrifice himself to the higher needs of the nation" (Griffin 42) to Falangist women. By advocating heroic action, the leaders of the party legitimated their own non-conformist stance; in other words, by transposing the myth of 'new man' to 'new woman,' they produced at least theoretical grounds for female agency. However, such a practice was less of a rule than an exception, for despite the party's alleged populism, the revolution, in keeping with Joseantonian mandate, was the task of a select minority, and it was just such a minority that the leaders of *Sección Femenina* represented themselves to be. It was they who could identify with the otherwise incongruous symbols of St. Teresa and Queen Isabel. For the masses in need of reeducation, these models of far-from-submissive women were reinterpreted and "sanitized" to the point of becoming quaint icons of piety and domesticity (Graham 184-5).

Both the Falange and Francoism presented themselves as a panacea for the nation's ills. A woman's role in nation-building, as predicated by the moralists and ideologues of the time, was not an entirely novel one. In Di Febo's words, theirs was "la misión 'regeneradora' y 're cristianizadora' . . . en la reconstrucción de la trama de valores disgregados por la República y la Guerra civil y recuperados por el 'Nuevo Estado'" ("the 'regenerating' and 'rechristianizing'")

²⁵ Although useful, such an assertion exacts further precision, for by subsuming the Falangist image of an ideal man under a Catholic model, it tends to reinforce Francoist emphasis on the Falange's traditionalism in lieu of its more revolutionary claims (a tendency that gained cultural and political legitimacy with the defeat of the Axis powers in the Second World War and the subsequent de-fascistization of the regime).



ing' mission . . . in the reconstruction of the set of values torn asunder by the Republic and the Civil War and recovered by the 'New State'") (*La santa* 105). And yet it was through this mission that the leaders of the *Sección Femenina*, akin to the example of the nineteenth-century "virtuous women writers", found legitimate discursive authority from which to interpret their own duties to the Fatherland.

We may thus conclude that much of the ambiguity behind the *Sección Femenina's* policies resulted from its own peculiar position as both a dominated (within the Falange and the state apparatus) and dominant (*vis-à-vis* the female constituents) group. As such, its discourse (the rationale employed by the organization to legitimate its activities) presents a constant balancing act between power and subordination, claims and disclaimers, advances and retractions, affirmation and effacement. What had to be avoided at all cost was the notion that women could ever supplant men in any endeavor that was not feminine by the ruling definition; in other words, the production and/or delineation of a gendered public sphere was a precondition to any female claim to action. In her address, "Re y conducta de las mujeres" ("Faith and the Conduct of Women"), Pilar Primo de Rivera reiterated the organization's stance as it appeared in the original statutes:

Lo que no haremos nunca es ponerlas [a las mujeres] en competencia con ellos [los hombres], porque jamás llegarán a igualarlos, y, en cambio, pierden toda la elegancia y toda la gracia indispensable para la convivencia. Y ya veréis como estas mujeres, formadas así con la doctrina cristiana y al estilo nacionalsindicalista, son útiles en la familia; en el municipio y en el sindicato.

(What we will never do is put [women] in competition with [men], because [the women] will never match [the men], and instead they will lose all the elegance and grace indispensable to family life. And you will see how these women, formed according to Christian doctrine and in the national-sindicalist mode, are useful in the family, in the municipality and in the syndicate.) (*Discursos* 14)

The difficulty in taking the organization's ostensibly anti-feminist stance at face value resides in the simple yet often-neglected fact that "under an authoritarian government, people [even those in the position of power] were not free to express their opinions" (De Grazia 13). What remains clear is that the advocacy of any apparent deviation from the norm (any practice that could potentially distract women from their mission), whether pursuit of higher education, career, or sports, had to meet two stipulations: it had to be secondary to marriage and motherhood, and it could not be construed as grounds for parity with men. To challenge the latter was not only deemed vain and untenable, but also strategically flawed: "Pero no pretendáis ponerlos con ellos de igual a

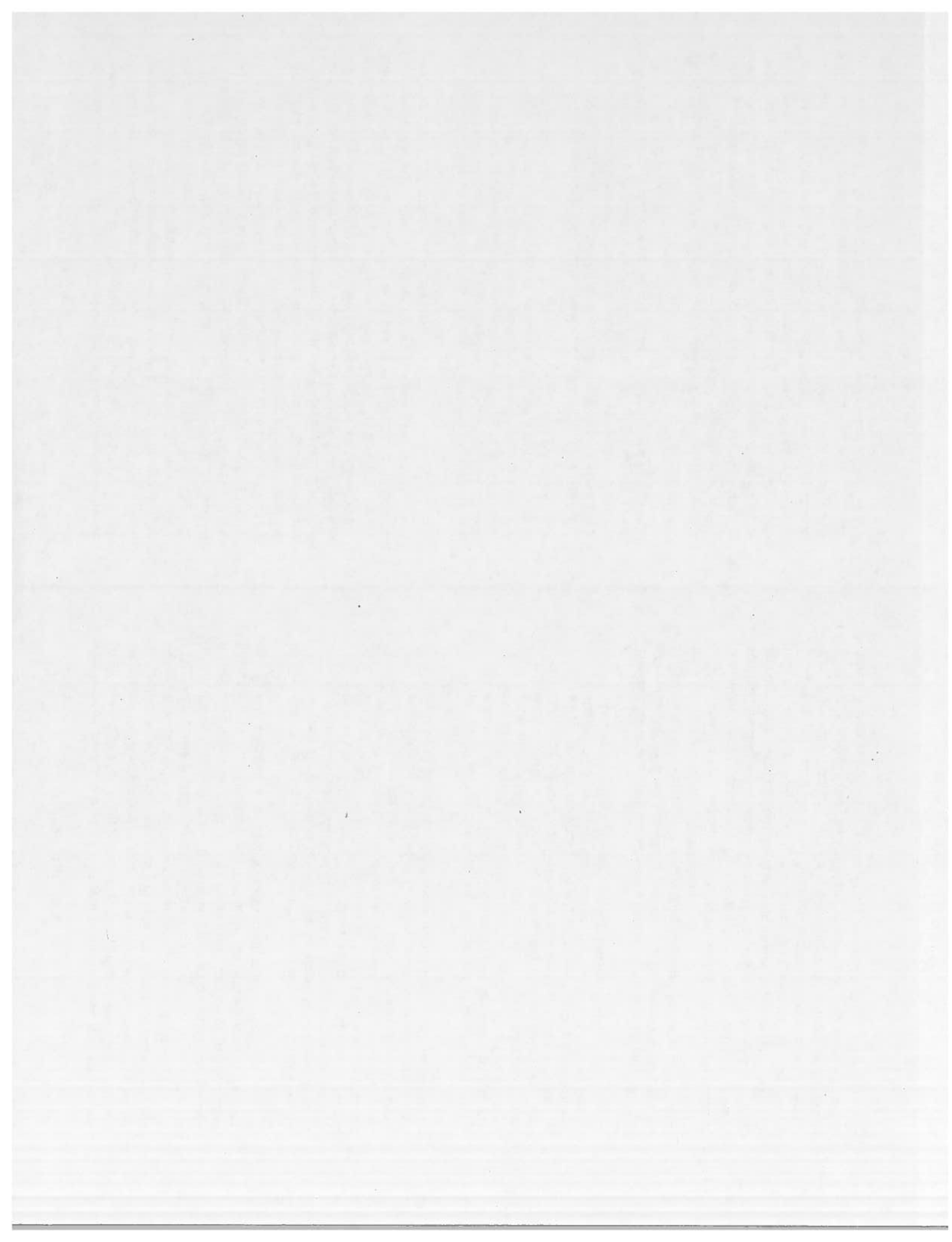
igual, porque entonces, lejos de conseguir lo que pretendéis, os tendrán los hombres en desprecio infinito y jamás podréis influir sobre ellos" ("But do not attempt to put yourselves on equal terms with them, because if you do, far from achieving what you seek, men will hold you in infinite disdain and you will never be able to have any influence on them") (Primo de Rivera, *Escritos* 173). The peculiarity of this assertion lies not in its challenge of the status quo (which it does not offer), but in its rationalization of compliance as a means for circumventing male authority. In a similar vein, the first official address to future proselytizers of the Falangist doctrine by the head of the women's cadre opened with a disclaimer for female involvement in the party:

El caso de las mujeres no puede ser de ninguna manera como el de los hombres. La mujer tiene un único fin que cumplir en la vida, y, por lo tanto, encaminadas a conseguir ese solo fin han de ir todas las normas que se le den para el desenvolvimiento de la misma. Así, pues el acoplamiento de la mujer dentro del Partido creo que debe de hacerse tomando como unidad su condición de mujer, y como cosa secundaria su profesión, trabajo, etc., ya que, por muy obrera, por muy estudiante y por muy maestra que sea, principalmente es mujer, con un fin determinado que cumplir, al que llega algunas veces pasando accidentalmente por la Universidad o por centros de trabajo.

(The case of women can in no way be like that of men. Women have a unique role to play in life, and consequently, all the tenets guiding their development must be directed towards that one end. Therefore, I believe that the placement of women within the Party should take into primary consideration their condition as women, and on a secondary level their profession, work, etc., since no matter how much of a worker, student, or teacher they may be, principally they are women, with a pre-determined destiny to fulfill, at which some arrive after accidentally passing through the University or through work centers.) (*Escritos* 195)

The need for demarcating the difference between the acquisition of a skill and its application, between knowledge and its exercise, merely accentuates the concomitance in discourse of two diverging impulses: for the preservation of the status quo and for its contravention.

The Falangist new woman was above all selfless, disciplined, obedient, composed, poised, steadfast, joyous, dynamic, valiant, graceful, industrious, sensible, and thrifty. She was recognized by her integrity, immaculate bearing, and dignified—verging on triumphant—demeanor, a sign of her moral rectitude and affiliation with the victorious forces that stood for all that represented good in the prevailing black-and-white representational system. What set her apart from other feminine types was her attitude of defiance in the face of adversity. She welcomed challenges and sought difficulties as an occasion to display her characteristic optimism, condensed in a maxim—"La vida sonríe



a quien le sourle, no a quien le hace muecas" ("Life smiles upon those who smile at it, not upon those who scowl")—popularized by the protagonist of one of Carmen de Icaza's most widely read novels, *Cristina Guzmán, profesora de idiomas* (qtd in Martin Gaité, *Usos amorosos* 40). The Falangist woman's other distinguishing marker, her "good taste," was founded on the bourgeois definition of beauty as morality and on the party's ascetic sensibility, which were observable both in her appearance and surroundings (Mosse 246).

In addition, the members of *Sección Femenina* were marked by what was known as Falangist "style," which served to emphasize their femininity in lieu of their public persona. In keeping with Victoria De Grazia's observations on the politicization of fashion, any conspicuous display of wealth was considered distasteful and unpatriotic. By the same token, the Falangist women's engagement with national life demanded that their appearance convey solidarity with the times. The plain refinement advocated by the leaders of the organization—the tailored grey suits worn by the heroines of popular romance novels—had the dual function of making a female presence in the male-dominated world unobtrusive and unthreatening, while underscoring her discreet personality, sensible character, and innate femininity (De Grazia 221–6).

Perhaps where the paradoxes and incongruities underlying the Falangist feminine ideal are most perceptible is in its normative representations, which sought to fuse more traditional (bourgeois and Catholic) mores with the fascist penchant for dynamism, youthfulness, enthusiasm, physical gracefulness, and resolve, not to mention a more progressive—however modest—emphasis on female education and employment. The new woman was to be at once politically conscious, yet domestically inclined; skilled, yet unemployed; well versed, yet quiet; subservient, yet enterprising; youthful, yet grave; meek, yet dignified; modest, yet accomplished; long-suffering, yet cheerful; staid, yet dynamic; simple, yet refined; austere, yet elegant, binding the ascetic with the aesthetic sensibility.

PART II

READING ROMANCE: QUESTIONING THE NORM

