



THE ROLE OF BLOGOSPHERE IN THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF MOTHERHOOD: FROM VIRGIN MARY TO #MALASMADRES

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ABSTRACT:

This article provides a historical overview with the aim of analyzing the representation of the figure of the mother from the pre-modern period to date. We will see the evolution of the social conception of motherhood from the image created by institutions and media (based on the figure of the Virgin Mary and the so-called "Angel of Home") to the current mother defined in first person in the discourses in social networking sites. A speech has prevailed in the maternal blogosphere in favor of intensive motherhood (Hays, 1998), though the so-called #malasmadres have also appeared with a more realistic view of motherhood. Anyway, these testimonies are left in the epidermis of the debate and have not already built a truly subversive maternal discourse that blurs or answers the topics traditionally related to motherhood.

KEY WORDS: motherhood- social networking- Internet- media- Virgin Mary - representation- blogosphere

EL PAPEL DE LA BLOGOSFERA EN LA CONSTRUCCIÓN SOCIAL DE LA MATERNIDAD: DE LA VIRGEN MARÍA A LAS #MALASMADRES

RESUMEN:

Este artículo traza un recorrido histórico con el objetivo de analizar la representación de la figura de la madre desde la época pre moderna hasta la actualidad. De la imagen creada por las instituciones y los medios de comunicación (partiendo de la figura de la Virgen María y el llamado "Ángel del Hogar") hasta la madre actual

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definida en primera persona en los discursos de las redes sociales de Internet, veremos la evolución de la concepción social de la maternidad. En la blogosfera maternal ha prevalecido un discurso a favor de la maternidad intensiva (Hays,1998), aunque también han aparecido las autodenominadas #malasmadres, con un relato en el que la maternidad es vivida de manera más realista. De todas maneras, estos testimonios se quedan en la epidermis del debate y no han construido hasta el momento un discurso maternal realmente subversivo, que desdibuje o conteste los tópicos tradicionalmente asociados a la maternidad.

PALABRAS CLAVE: maternidad- redes sociales- Internet- medios de comunicación- Virgen María- representación- blogosfera

1. INTRODUCTION

For centuries, motherhood, as a social practice, has been built and defined by institutions such as religion, education or the media. Starting from a patriarchal view of family and society, these institutions have influenced a totally positive, idealized shadowless image of what it means to be a mother. Thus, the subjective experience of motherhood that women live has always been influenced by the representation that others have made of this stage, of which the negative aspects have historically been silenced.

Since the twentieth century, the mass media, being amplifiers and disseminators of the myths that form the collective imagination, resulted in the concept of the perfect mother. All this came into contradiction with social reality, since the return of women to work made it impossible for them to remain being the maximum and solely responsible for home care. This dissonant image of the mother who was represented in the media began to generate, from an artistic context from the second half of the twentieth century, reactions of mothers who claimed their individuality and their own voice.

2. OBJECTIVES

This communication will take a historical tour examining the representation in society of the figure of the mother from the pre-modern period to date. The aim is to observe how it has generated an idyllic picture, marked by the figure of the Virgin Mary and supplemented by the "Angel of Home" spread from the Protestant-capitalist countries.

3. METHODOLOGY

Currently, the possibility of personal expression to large audiences through social networks has encouraged and extended narratives about motherhood. Many anonymous mothers embody their testimonies on maternal experience in online socialization platforms such as the so-called "maternal blogosphere" or the website *Club of #malasmadres* that we will study here.

As regards the analysis of the presence of new leaders in the blogosphere, this article is based on a previous study by the same authors entitled *Mothers Have the Floor: Analysis of the Phenomenon of Blogging Mothers* (Visa, Crespo, 2012) in which an analysis of the content of the 10 blogs about motherhood written in Spanish with more followers was made. In this article, in order to observe the plurality and evolution of anonymous mothers' speeches on the Internet, these data are supplemented with the analysis of 50 blog posts on the website of the Club of #malasmadres, a portal that brings together experiences of different women and had in March 2015 more than 61,241 fans on Facebook and 15,400 on twitter.

From the analysis of several testimonies by mothers on the network, we will see if these platforms have served to fill the figure of the mother with new nuances or, on the contrary, there is still a prevailing ideal of motherhood as an always positive experience performed with a maternal love instinctively linked to women.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Construction of maternity: From the Virgin Mary to the Angel of Home.

Several images have contributed to the current conception of motherhood in the West. In this section we will highlight two, which we believe to be fundamental pillars on which our narrative is constructed thereon; the Virgin Mary of the Christian tradition and the Angel of Home built by the Anglo-Saxon capitalist society. In the twentieth century, this sweetened and distorted vision was a source of reply by the new woman that was constructing herself and claimed her individuality and own voice.

The classical mythology (Alganza, 2003, p. 1-92), the stories, the history of all peoples is full of mothers and stepmothers² charting the collective imagination of the cultures where these stories are told. In the West, we should lament the lack of diversity of characters that we built. Because it is basically the mythology of the

² The figure of the stepmother is very present in European popular culture has traditionally served as a counterpoint to the good mother. The stepmother is incarnation, in a way, everything bad that can be a caregiver, reinforcing the idea that biology help in creating links with the children (S. Birkhäuser-Oeri, *Mothers and stepmothers in fairy tales*, Turner publishing, 2010, p. 29).

Virgin Mary who has influenced our imagination. A mother without edges or shadows. The dangers of this idealized view point out to us from psychoanalysis, Birkhäuser-Oeri S. (2011, 9):

The Virgin Mary appears in tradition only as a luminous figure. This has negative effects, especially to women. Because, to be a whole, women need the image of female whole, ie, a goddess who does not approach only the bright part (...) If, however, they neglect the dark mother of their own, they are in danger of identifying themselves with their bright aspect. Then, the destructive part lives, but unconsciously, that is, being repressed, which can be very dangerous to them and the others.

To that image that came from the Christian orthodoxy (especially in Catholic countries), we must add the figure of the perfect housewife, to be exalted in Victorian England, with Queen Victoria as a standard³

The mother will be defined according to capitalist ideals. She must educate citizens in the economic order. Her role is paramount. She is the backbone from which the models and the morale will be built and from which the system will be played. A moral and educational framework that would support economic and social structure.

The construction of this female stereotype refers not only to motherhood. The woman in this new bourgeoisie was homebound, she had to respond to and serve the main producer of goods, the master of the house. Care of their children was another of her attributes. One of her main features: she would not be controversial or have desires and personality of her own.

Thus was she defined by Virginia Woolf in the speech she delivered in 1931 that would be entitled "Professions for Women":

"Perhaps you have not heard of this woman, maybe you do not know the meaning of my words when I refer to the Angel of Home. I will describe her as briefly as possible. She was intensely sympathetic. She was intensely charming. She had absolutely no selfishness. She excelled in the difficult arts of family life. She sacrificed herself daily. If there was chicken for lunch, she had the thigh; if there was a draft, she sat amid it; in short, she was made in such a way that she never had an opinion or a desire of her own but she rather always adhered to the opinion and the desire

³ To deepen, Sally Shuttleworth, "Demonic Mothers: Ideologies of Motherhood Bourgeois in the Mid-Victorian Era," in *Rewriting the Victorians: Theory, History, and the Politics of Gender*, ed. Linda M. Shires (London: Routledge, 1992): 31-51 and Abrams, Lynn. "Ideals of Womanhood in Victorian Britain." BBC History, 2001. Web. 28 March 2012.

of the others. Needless to say, above all, she was pure. It was estimated that her purity was her main beauty. Her greatest grace was her blushes. In those days, the last of Queen Victoria, every house had its Angel ⁴"

As regards maternity or relationship with her children, as you can read in the serial novel "Diary of a Lady of Provinces", in this diary the troubles of an upper-middle-class mother in an English rural are ironically told, you can see along the story that, to be a decent woman, it was also necessary to live the relationship with the her children from a distance and authority.

Vicky looks great riding the pony, and they compliment me about her, which I accept with apathy and disbelief to prove I'm a modern mother who does not stoop to boasting like a fool about her children (Delafield, 2013, p.113)

On the other hand, as you can see, words like Virgin Mary or Angel are used, ultimately, it is no exaggeration to refer to the creation of the mystique of motherhood. A. Halliday's in the article "Mother's" 1865, would define maternal love this way: *"It is a holy passion, in which all others are absorbed and lost. It is a sacred flame on the altar of the heart that is never quenched* ⁵"

Exalting the mothers (women) to an unreal, nonhuman religious sphere, what was achieved, as we shall see, was frustration, since these are simply unrealistic models.

On the other hand, the analysis of the construction of the ideal mother would not be complete if we did not refer to the important boom of psychoanalytic theories in the early twentieth century and the relevance that the stage of infancy had thereafter. While this new look toward the smaller ones has had undeniable advantages, it has also added new burdens on the already common ones, because the mother will feel thereafter primarily (sometimes unique) responsible for the emotional health of her children. (Visa, Crespo, 2014, p.18)

"The curse of psychoanalysis" everything is decided before being 3 years old, "I know it by heart", Annie Ernaux laments in her story "The Ice Woman" (Davey, 2007, p.135).

⁴The text can be found without any difficulty on the web, since the text by V Woolf are copyright free, even so, this concretely was published within the volume *Women and Literature*, Lumen publishing house, 1981.

⁵ It is altogether above reason; it is a holy passion, in which all others are absorbed and lost. It is a sacred flame on the altar of the heart, which is never quenched" (Traducción propia). Andrew Halliday's, "Mother's", *All the Year Round*, 9 de agosto de 1865.

With these items, we arrived at mid-20th century. That is when the big jump occurs in the construction of an imagery. The advent of mass media makes moral and exemplary speeches of the middle and upper classes penetrate the masses as well. The good shadowless mother, without any judgment or desires of her own that should serve her entire family, taking care for the physical and emotional health of all its members, except herself, will enter every home, in every social stratum. Also working mothers, also those who are not at home, also those with poor living conditions will feel responsible and guilty of their situation and that of their children.

Thus, with the majority incorporation of women into paid work, the model will be fully assumed and internalized. This is also the time that women had begun to live their individuality thanks to the rise of the feminist movement. The model falters and begins to question by some voices. The shadows of the perfect mother is discerned. The edges begin to be told in the narrative of creative women. In many cases, those who are not mothers try to follow the model of Virginia Wolf and shall endeavor to kill that Angel, trying not to do away with the infancy of their children:

I turned to the Angel and threw my hands on his neck. I did my best to kill him. My excuse, if they took me to the court, would be self-defense. If I had not killed him, he would have killed me. He would have ripped the heart of my writings (Davey, 2007, p.135).

4. 2. The representation of motherhood in the mass media of the twentieth century

First, before I comment on the figure of the mother in the mass media, it should be stressed that the figure of the mother has had little weight in audiovisual products since their contents have tended to conform to an ideal of female beauty detached from maternity and therefore only a few mothers have had a role as protagonists in the film or television drama. (Huston, 2013). When this has been shown, it has been made from a patriarchal and vision based on the positive maternal myths discussed above.

In the classic American films, it was the dominant trait for decades in Anglo-Saxon and European countries, maternal figures were characterized according to these two opposing facets: either a phallic almighty mother (silent, sacrificed and relegated to home) or a castrating mother that overprotects her children, who adore and fear her at once (many examples can be found in the films of A. Hitchcock). Only decades later, the horror and science fiction films add another category: the mother seen as a threat because of a maternity lived abnormally or monstrously forced (Merás, 2012), which can be seen in films like *Alien* (Ridley Scott, 1979).

With regard to television fiction, from the first appearance of a pregnant woman in American comedy *I Love Lucy* (1953) to the sitcoms of the late twentieth century, motherhood was presented as a rewarding and natural experience for women. Despite the massive incorporation of women to work, it took a long time for maternal characters on the screen to incorporate the anguish for conciliation and spread the image of a "super-woman" able to thrive at work while taking care of for her children without complications and without having mixed feelings about this situation. (Pérez, 2014). It was in the nineties and particularly with the "Quality Television" of the early twenty-first century that the mothers being the protagonist of the series began to be represented in a multifaceted way (Tous, 2012)

A devoted, willing and always-knowing-how-to-act mother was the most visible image on television, also because of the stereotypes still currently perpetuated by advertising messages. These messages have made a speech in which women appear as the maximum responsible for the care of their homes and children, with motherhood-praising slogans that influence, often through humor and exaggeration, the incompetence of men when performing the same chores. (Villegas, 2014).

In defining this image of "good mother" logically its opposite is defined too, the "bad mother", who appears in the media sometimes through information concerning mothers with violent behavior towards their children or are negligent in their care. A prototype of mother who always appears stigmatized, seen as unnatural and which no woman would want to be identified with.

Specialized magazines in childcare and baby care, meanwhile, have also fueled the hegemonic discourse in which the mother is the primary responsibility and final development of the child, and often pressure them to be well informed of the latest developments regarding the upbringing, always entered by specialists that discredit the views normally received by the family. (Medina et al, 2012). His speech also does not address a number of mothers with common needs that can be listed and collectively solved but, by speaking to each reader individually, there is no possibility of turning a personal problem into social and, therefore , political. (Gallego, 1990, p.54).

From the gossip magazines, during the late twentieth century, the so-called "celebrity moms" (famous actresses or models who are mothers) have filled the front pages posing as devout and happy mothers who are transformed and full following their motherhood, which has not entail any waiver in their career and has left no trace in their body. This conception of motherhood defined as "momism" (Douglas, Michaels, 2004), referring to the intensity with which mothers are devoted to their

children, is very contradictory because it promotes an impossible ideal suggesting that women should successfully work outside home and live their motherhood intensively at the same time.

As we can see, the major mainstream media in the twentieth century represented the mother with a high level of excellence, without offering an alternative discourse.

4.3. The figure of mother in art and literature in the twentieth century

During the last century, the maternal figure was not present very much in cultural representations (Freixas, 2012), although there are a few exceptions of mothers who, from the artistic context, have offered testimonies contrary to the hegemonic vision of the "good mother" present in the media. In the book *Motherhood and Creation*, testimonies of artist mothers such as Doris Lessing, Tillie Olsen, Annie Ernaux, Toni Morrison and Margaret Adwood have been compiled and, through excerpts from their autobiographies, memoirs and novels, a broad category of maternal feelings, such as loss of control, altered emotional state or refusal to take over housekeeping are addressed. Thus, they started to raise the first voices that questioned the image of motherhood as the threshold to a happy experience making women full persons.

I did not know I was very lucky to exist in a historical moment in which certain writer women, mostly in strictest isolation, not being aware of the existence of other women, tensed with grief, pain, fear to madness , madness itself (...) were writing for the first time directly and in depth about their female experience." A. Ostriker. A bold assumption: maternity and poetry (Davey, 2007, p.165)

In the films, we can also find some productions answering the predominant image of motherhood, though said movies are scarce and distributed outside the industry. The filmmaker Alice Guy, a pioneer woman in filmmaking, had already filmed, during the early years of cinema, a large number of short films featuring non-stereotypical mothers who acted according to their own desires, portrayed from a sense of humor (as in *Madame a des envies*, 1906). From the sixties, some documentaries created by women filmed the everyday environment subversively. Rejection to the household space, the rituals of daily life and the presentation of a woman's body realistically are recurring themes in the work of the Belgian director Chantal Akerman and also in others such as Schmeerguntz (1965) de Gunvoo Nelson and Dorothy Wiley, in which the pregnancy of one of them is shown; or *Las Margaritas* (1966) by Vera Chytilová, in which two women acting freely and without responding to the assigned roles appear.

In art there are some dissenting voices that qualify the imagination of motherhood with individual experiences. Women who dare to represent the female body during postpartum and parenting, reflecting the physical and emotional changes that occur therein, with feelings other than happiness and fulfillment that also include fatigue and disorientation. An example is found in the project *Post-Partum Document* (1973-1979), conducted by the British Mary Kelly. In it, she explores artistically, under a psychoanalytic perspective, the relationship with her child during the first six years of breeding, from birth until the child becomes an autonomous person. Through numerous documents, the identity of the woman as a mother and artist is explored and the difficulty to take on the role that the patriarchal society places as "natural" to women is represented.

More recently, in 2013, the artist Ana Casas Broda presented the photographic project *Kinderwunsch* (a German term that combines the words "children" and "desire") in which she photographed herself in different everyday moments for seven years, thus illustrating the process of becoming a mother, showing moments of play and fellowship as well as others of exhaustion and routine.

It thus began to answer the maternal ideal prevailing in the media, although still from minority contexts. It would be necessary to wait for the expansion of the Internet for these considerations to be made by more women and also to reach major sectors of society.

4.4 Maternal blogosphere: a plural discourse on the meaning of motherhood. The rebellion against the "super-mom"

In the 21st century, the possibility of expressing feelings generated by motherhood to large audiences is also accessible to anonymous women, since they have platforms at home to document their daily lives as mothers. The expansion of the Internet, which began to be common in the 1990s, allows quick access to information and creation of online communities (Weinberg, 2003) thanks to the emergence of social networks that have achieved millions of users in the first years of this century (Blogger, 1999, Myspace, 2003; Facebook, 2004; Twitter, 2006). These pages allow users to have their own space to talk about their experiences and share them with others on the network. Never before had personal experience been so amplified.

The number of blogs in which mothers express their personal experiences is increasingly growing since its emergence in 2010⁶ and, in many Western countries,

⁶ The webpage *Madresfera*, which draws together blogs on motherhood and fatherhood written in Spanish had over 1,500 blogs in January 2015

they are a benchmark to many other mothers. These voices that narrate the feelings aroused by motherhood make speech, which was so far unique and influenced by the institutions, more plural and disseminated by the mothers themselves. The unifying stereotypes are no longer valid but individualities arise.

In the texts of these blogs, the body of the mother is vindicated; the myth of the "super-mom" pervasive so far in the media is questioned and the will to describe motherhood more realistically is manifested. Indeed, the clash involved in living the experience compared to what was previously imagined is one of the reasons often argued by the authors to open a blog.

The difficult conciliation between working, personal and family life is one of the most debated issues in these personal pages. In 2011, following a complaint by a mother, the platform *Conciliation Real-ya* was created, which mobilized more than 1,000 people in a few days. It is still currently active in promoting a change of mind to achieve real reconciliation, trying to prove that with the improvement of working conditions, yield is much higher in all areas.

These words from the blog *Mom also knows* exemplify this speech away from the ideal of a perfect mother:

The day has only 24 hours, I have only two hands and one head, and however hard I try, I do not get to everything, I cannot, I should not, I do not want ... I do not see why we are asked so much, why we have let them continue demanding us to be everything and more. We have culturally passed from being noned to being hyperexploited, in order to be dignified ... but are we crazy? Who do we want to impress? For my part I declare loud and clear I AM NOT A SUPERWOMAN and I do not intend to be one, and I do not want to be one. I declare myself free from even trying. I know my capabilities but also my limits ... and I cannot feel guilty for not being able to do everything 100%⁷

Together with this speech, there has also been, in most maternity blogs both nationally and at the Anglo-Saxon level, a penchant for the so-called "natural upbringing" as the authors narrate their experience of motherhood consciously lived with their body and that of their children; and they choose to live as naturally as possible (with minimal medical and technical mediations) processes such as childbirth, breastfeeding support in the dream of children.

⁷ "No soy superwoman". Blog "*Mamá también sabe*". 04/03/2014

This natural upbringing in which the mother is the main supplier of children's needs shares some precepts that Sharon Hays (1995) defined as intensive motherhood. It is defined by three fundamental principles: investing a huge amount of time, energy, money and emotional stress in raising one's children; initial contempt for fatherly contribution to that upbringing; and consideration of children as sacred, innocent, naturally pure beings that constitute the complete opposite of a mercantilist society. Currently the mother is no longer, in most cases, the primary caretaker of the child, but she still has the will to devote large amounts of time, energy and material resources to her child. There is widespread concern to recognize and respond to all needs and wishes of the child, as well as be aware of both the opinions of experts and new educational trends.

Also, "new domesticity" (Matchar, 2013) has been defined as the revaluation of more natural behaviors about food, clothing, education and implement the "do it yourself" in most domestic areas, a trend of which there are also examples in the blogosphere. However, we believe that this so-called "return to nature" must be analyzed in the context of economic and moral crisis, where many neoliberal precepts are openly questioned. Many of the attitudes about upbringing that try to promote a stronger attachment of children (prolonged breastfeeding, portorage, co-sleeping) believe that they should be analyzed as an "urgent stopgap" facing a neoliberal society that lives turning its back on care and upbringing.

Moreover, it is clear that the difficulties to enter certain models and standards continue. We note therefore that the plurality of voices in the maternal blogosphere does not have a single line but brings together working mothers who advocate a true conciliation as mothers by choice or, as conciliation has been impossible, have decided to get off the system and devote themselves exclusively to raising their children.

With regard to other social networks that mothers disseminate their experience through images, as opposed to the blogosphere where the word dominates, we find other stories of motherhood more in line with the precepts that defined twentieth-century good mothers. On platforms such as *Pinterest*, *Instagram* or *Facebook*, the image of motherhood that is disseminated tends to be more idyllic, though there are increasingly more exceptions. As they are fragmented and not accompanied by text, images are often seen out of context, with no more information than the same picture, transmitting an idea of motherhood and the immediate postpartum period that has little to do with reality. And we must not forget that, in *Instagram*, filters can be added to images to improve them and provide them with a more cinematic

and idyllic atmosphere. It is not surprising that some studies⁸ show that Facebook promotes depressive moods and feelings of loneliness in some users that contemplate the photographs, who will tend to think that idyllic motherhood lives forever in the home of others.

In reaction to this idealization and responding to those blogs devoted to detailing the experience of motherhood lived perfectly and without contradictions, in December 2013 the page of the *Club of #malasmadres* was born, which brings together texts with women telling ironically non-idyllic moments of their motherhood. With a vintage and festive aesthetic, the page invites you to live this stage in an uninhibited way. In the blog of its creator and main author, there are texts in which it is said without prejudice that "motherhood gets you tired " and there is advocacy for the need for mothers to "look a little bit to themselves." The philosophy of this movement follows the footsteps of Anglo Saxon blogs *Uncensored Mother* or *Her Bad Mother*, where it is revealed that, in addition to being mothers, we are women and have interests and needs beyond raising our children.

The term "#malasmadres" (bad mothers) with which they call themselves is symbolic as it serves to build an imagery contrary to the "good mother" away from negligent maternity with which the word "bad mother" was related so far. Willingness to put one's makeup on, talk about sex, want to spend hours alone or go to a concert with friends, leaving one's child safely, naturally, do not mean to be a bad mother. (*"The wedding day, the day when the good father and myself left the good son with good grandparents, the good uncles and the good niece and said "bye, bye, see you tomorrow."*), But it serves to answer to intensive motherhood and laugh at the "super-mom", which is no longer seen as the ideal to be achieved. The Imperfect mother is vindicated as something natural that does not generate feelings of guilt. (*"The beautiful advent calendar that Paula taught us to do is another story, we tried to do it and we have left a little twisted, I would say"*).

However, as discussed below, these testimonies remain in the epidermis of the debate and have not built so far a truly subversive maternal discourse that blurs or answer the topics traditionally associated with motherhood.

3.5 The shadows of motherhood in the blogosphere

We have seen how the speech proposed on the page *The Club of #malasmadres* and other similar blogs in the maternal blogosphere includes renunciation of the ideal of

⁸ Hui-Tzu Grace Chou and Nicholas Edge. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*. February 2012, 15(2): 117-121. doi:10.1089/cyber.2011.0324. "They Are Happier and Having Better Lives than I Am":

the mother given to care of children and home. But despite the possibility offered by social networks to express plural testimonies, even anonymously, it is still difficult to find texts that speak of the shadows of motherhood and of the negative part that becoming a mother has meant to each woman. There are very few texts in which some mothers express they have not always felt happy and proud of their children, or that sincerely express the renunciations that this experience has meant to them. Nor are there common stories of women who admit to be suffering from postpartum depression, despite its being socially recognized.

As noted by Beatriz Gimeno, *"It cannot be that about a human experience with such a powerful ability to change the life of any woman there are barely just some negative speeches, if only for plurality"*⁹. This silence of the negative aspects of motherhood may be partly due to what Noelle-Neumann (1977) defined as the spiral of silence, whereby those who publicly express their thoughts tend to be the ones who have a mindset more akin to hegemonic ideas. People are more likely to publicly support an opinion if it appears as dominant in the media. Therefore, those who have opposing views tend to silence them to avoid social isolation. In a subject such as maternity, of which only the positive side has historically been publicized, this spiral is especially important as, so far, answering the topic of the "good mother" entailed stopping being it and entering into the thorny terrain of "bad mothers" still linked to features of irresponsibility and negligence.

Similarly, the desire to write a public blog and share one's experience is easier when this experience is positive. Developing a narrative of one's own in depression or at traumatic moments requires more effort and will, since the person is still installed on the situation and cannot distance herself to build an intelligible story. (Frank, 1995)

Gradually, probably favored by the anonymity provided by the Internet, some mothers do dare tell about the other side of motherhood. These words from the post "Motherhood in the closet" from the blog *Mom* (upstream), which has more than 4,500 followers on Facebook and is one of the most popular in the maternal blogosphere, can serve as an example:

I think it's pretty easy to explain beautiful things, to talk about the love you feel, about how your life has changed (for the better), to upload photos of Nordic-style houses where even toys match the decoration or spectacular sunsets or crafts that you have invented by yourself. It's the kind of things that you want to share. But it is hard to say that you're going wrong, not only because of the very thing

⁹ <http://beatrizgimeno.es/2014/02/13/construyendo-un-discurso-antimaternal/> (13-02-2014)

of recognizing your own weakness but because it looks like being happy is mandatory when you are a mother (especially if you're a new mother) and because, why deny it?, you fear that they understand what you're not saying. You're afraid they may think badly of you, that they may think ill of your children. You're afraid of everything and therefore shut up. Well, here I am today uncovering the cap to move on: The last two and a half years are being very hard. (...) . Life with a highly demanding two-years-and-five-months-old baby is devastating

This post had 141 comments, in many of which several mothers recognized their being identified with the author. Apart from the positive discourse or the fact that it humorously vindicates a new stereotype of mother, there is also room, though still little, for these statements. And this is one of the great things of the network, which allows the voices making up the definition of what it means to be a mother to be different.

Finally it should be noted that there is not much presence of those women who openly confess they do not want to be mothers, though it is a group that begins to be displayed. In recent years, the childfree movement (which brings together couples without children by choice) has been present in the media, but it is generally symbolized by heterosexual couples who freely choose not to be parents, and there are still few particularizations in specific cases. The movement No Mo. (Not Mothers), which emerged from the British Association *Gateway Women*, brings together women who choose not to be mothers, calling for "*respect from a society set up in the absurd belief that a woman should give birth at least once in her life.*" But, certainly, there is little presence of these testimonies in social networks, though we hope that in time this will change and begin to particularize and exemplify more situations and circumstances that lead each woman not to be a mother.

5. CONCLUSION

The positive image portrayed in the media has severely corseted the maternal experience. The perfect mother, the ideal mother is involved in features being not only positive but sacred. Luckily, since the mid-twentieth century the voices of mothers that, in first person, questioned the benefits of that motherhood were amplified. The narratives have multiplied exponentially with the advent of social networks. That does not necessarily mean diversity.

Despite the emergence of voices like those of #malasmadres, we consider that they are certainly still very nice pieces of criticism that do not respond or question the foundations and axes of motherhood built from power. It should be noted that there

have been other more lawless and more in-depth speeches that have sparked great controversy in networks such as the feminist activist Beatriz Gimeno and her self-called "anti-maternal speech."

Still, we think that we have not gone out of the binary discourse. As A. Ostriker said, "*that women should make babies instead of books is the opinion of Western civilization. That women should make books instead of babies is a variation on the same theme*" (Davey, 2007, p.163).

It would be interesting, and perhaps more subversive, to go beyond labels such as "bad and good mothers" or "anti-maternal and pro-maternal " because they face and do not provide inclusive proposals. We believe it is most interesting to answer the following: can you raise happy sons and daughters without following the established models?, can I be a good mother and also any woman that I can think of?

We propose to be aware of our inadequacies, our imperfections, to assume them and set good examples, to teach models of being different mothers, to build alternative discourses (and alternatives lives) where all parties involved in upbringing feel the possibility of being happy is near. Let us untie the corsets constraining us and preventing us from fully enjoying our maternal experience.

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