

Motherhood learning: discourses for women's education in Spain (XX century)

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Abstract: Throughout the history of the western world, we have considered that the roles of wife and mother should be necessarily taken by women. In this way, the correlation between woman-mother has been transmitted and perpetuated over centuries as an unchangeable principle. Women were educated since childhood for home, marriage, and motherhood. This domestic trilogy confined them to a private and exclusive life. Motherhood and the continuation of the species represented women's "supreme mission", their only destiny and recognized means of self-realization in cultural terms. The confluence of the approaches of the worlds of medicine, religion and education, or in other words, medical, moral or pedagogical discourse maintained the traditional model which promoted the woman-mother model and thus it was necessary to educate women in that way. Girls and women were educated beginning at a very young age in what was considered to be their exclusive mission, beginning with what was perceived to be their lack of abilities and ignorance of skills. Motherhood has had its own history—one that is constantly transforming itself, one that has never been static, or universal or atemporal.

Key words: girls, little women, education, home, motherhood.

Resumen: A lo largo de la historia del mundo occidental, se ha atribuido a las mujeres los roles de esposas y madres como función obligatoria. De manera que la identificación mujer-madre ha sido transmitida y perpetuada a través de los siglos como un principio inalterable. Desde niñas eran educadas para el hogar, el matrimonio y la maternidad, la trilogía doméstica que las confina a la exclusividad en la vida privada. Porque la maternidad y la perpetuación de la especie representaba la "suprema misión" de las mujeres, su único destino y medio de autorrealización reconocido en las pautas culturales. La confluencia entre los planteamientos de la medicina, religión y escuela, o lo que es lo mismo el discurso médico, moral o pedagógico, mantenían el modelo tradicional fomentando el modelo mujer-madre y era necesario educarla en tal sentido. Se trataba de instruir a las niñas y mujeres desde edad temprana en lo que se consideraba su misión exclusiva, partiendo de su incapacidad e ignorancia de sus saberes. La maternidad ha tenido su propia historia, los momentos difieren, va transformándose, no ha sido estática, tampoco universal y atemporal.

Palabras clave: niñas, pequeñas mujeres, educación, hogar, maternidad.

Introduction

Motherhood has its own history, it has not been static, neither timeless nor universal. In continuous evolution it has been in transformation in time and space. In the contemporary history of the occidental world, motherhood appears as the key element in the definition of the feminine roles and expectations. Women had to live because of and for motherhood; their maternal instinct was stressed, in generating familial welfare as obligatory social function. It was their mission and essence, at the time identity and model. The evolution of motherhood has marched united to society, always burdened with meaning and not exempt from problems. Nonetheless, as time passed, motherhood has been culturally constructed and deconstructed, depending on the historical circumstances, always associated with woman's identity and the paradigm of the good mother, model to imitate and which had to be learnt. Hence, the motherhood's identity configured in the XIX century with the recognition of the importance of formation; the desire to become the exemplar reference figure spurred women to reach their goal by means of the increment of the identification they followed the stereotyped canon that set the measure of being a good or bad mother.

Thus woman-mother identification has been transmitted and perpetuated as an unalterable principle. As children women were educated for the household, marriage and motherhood, the domestic trilogy which confined them to exclusivity in their private life. For motherhood and the perpetuation of the species represented the women's "supreme mission", their only destiny and realization means recognized in cultural patterns. This cult to motherhood has placed women around a series of values (love, kindness, abnegation, devotion) before the counter model of a bad mother. Even if this has been a discourse supported upon traditional culture, in the trajectory of humanity women have fulfilled a very precise social function as well as necessary for the species: procreation. What is more, more often, the function of mother has been prolonged in time, not only covering the gestation period, but covering children's upbringing and education until they become autonomous.

The confluence of medicine statements, religion and school, this is to say the medical, moral and pedagogical discourse, fomented the woman-mother traditional model; from the convincement of their ignorance it was considered necessary to educate women for motherhood; a traditional discourse, valid even among the most progressive sectors, included the liberals, due to which they claim the rights of women as mothers. As from the end of the XIX century, different States of Occidental Europe put a social policy of protection to motherhood into practice; in this same context the so-called “maternal feminism” appeared, which reclaimed rights for mothers and considered motherhood as a social function, argumentation supported on the fact that domestic life was women’s responsibility; it is, the care for the household and children. The division of remunerated and non-remunerated labor was rejected, yet the difference of roles and spaces (public and private) was accepted.

Occidental thought has transformed motherhood in object of public discourse, nevertheless, it has been a topic not fully analyzed; the historiographic silence has been one of its characteristics, in addition to scarce Eurocentric studies (Knibiehler and Fouquet, 1980; Delumeau and Roche, 1990; D’Amelia, 1997). The evolution of the symbolical constructions of maternity in the Occidental cultural context is understood as a variable of human relation socially determined (Knibiehler, 2001; Palomar, 2004; Thébaud, 2005). We tried to follow the theoretical development of its social and historical narration through the critical argumentation around the main axes of its meaning which have defined it in its trajectory. To sum up, we are interested in learning the signs of a cultural heritage redefined along time. We founded this work upon the interest in projecting motherhood, its diverse realities, and multiple experiences. Our purpose is to analyze motherhood following the evolutive line, in the significant temporary segment of the first half of the XX century. Despite it is unquestionable that policies, to a large extent, transnational, in different European States were applied, we will pay attention to the Spanish case. In order to achieve our objectives, we have used the historical method of research, consulting official documentation, bibliography from that time and the current one referred to such period, enquiring into libraries and

newspaper libraries. The method of analysis pays attention to several perspectives, however, it is guided by the preoccupation of a series of common questions: such as the analysis of the representation of ideological categories, the relation with the social imaginary, the specular function of the dominating discourses, manifestation of those of the subjects, among other. We recognize certain limitations for the research's development, mainly, in respect to sources and methodology; we do not ignore our limits of hermeneutic and epistemological character, of our possibilities of knowledge, nonetheless the authors are those who construct, identify, establish the sequences, complete the gaps and provide a historiographic sense. Our topics are difficult to manage due to the interrelation between different factors and because history is full of contradictions. The proposed reading is in debt with the methodological contribution from the feminist interdisciplinary theory and that of the cultural studies, which permit an approximation to the space of hermeneutic interpretation. This double discourse has been crucial in different spheres of thought and culture at the time it has influenced quotidian life.

The cult to motherhood or the essence in feminine identity

The organization of the patriarchal society has been based in the primacy of men over women. Therefore, in the socialization process, men have been raised as masculine objects and oriented toward productive labor, an activity conferred to the public space; conversely, women have been raised as feminine subjects who have been given domestic-familial tasks (Rodríguez, 1999: 101). Masculine model has imposed them a model by means of which they have been educated and modeled in a sexist manner, so that they are identified as and assumed the predetermined role. Rodríguez (1999: 119), inspired by the theory by Foucault, mentions the “mode of subjectification”, i.e., how the person is suggested to recognize themselves as subject with a determined sexual behavior. The result of that differentiated education has been women's inferiority and subordination, a social asymmetry constructed from biological differences, which has conditioned their existence in a broad sense. Summarizing, society has reserved a specific world for women (Badinter, 1991: 280), from here that Simone de Beauvoir (2005: 207)

wanted to break the myth: “one is not being born as a woman, one becomes a woman”. Moreover, women’s identity has been constructed from motherhood and their biological nature, which has conferred them a determinate role in society, assigning them the private space and family as life project, even if it is characterized by social invisibility; for men have constructed the figure of women-mother as “genderized subject” at the time they have elaborated and fomented this discourse (Sau, 2001: 100).

In a large part of Occident motherhood has been interpreted as a myth by patriarchal society (Fernández, 2000; Ferro, 1991; Hays, 1998; Lozano, 2000; Simon, 1985; Tubert, 1996), and as any society aspect it is a historical construction projected upon feminine life (Badinter, 1991: 369). Femininity and motherhood have marched united; both aspects have been identified, to the extent of considering motherhood the feminine essence (Various authors, 2002: 11-49). Nevertheless, motherhood has been constructed along human history, thereby, it is cultural and does not have an essential character; neither is motherhood the essence nor is it part of feminine instinct, as it has been projected through historic legitimization. In the occidental culture, responding to the hegemonic discourse, motherhood has been the axis around which women’s lives have gravitated. Notwithstanding, even if the prevailing cultural mandate has affected women, it acquires different connotations depending on the social and cultural strata where they are. Thus, certain heterogeneity is seen as for the socio-cultural patterns, in such manner that different ways of experiencing motherhood are distinguishable.

It has always been considered that the essential function of women was motherhood, which they enjoyed, and that the reproduction of the species was their interest or particular vocation. Consequently, a complex mysticism of motherhood, in all of the known civilizations, which currently has full validity has been constructed; nonetheless, this maternal vocation which men have cultivated with a lot of effort, at the time that it is estimated the main feature of feminine personality, has been designed in accordance with the patterns of the mid-class occidental family. Actually, motherhood has never dignified women, nor does the child by the fact of being born contribute with the mother, they rather demand from her (Bouvard, 1971: 26). The cult to motherhood has placed women on a series of values (love,

kindness, abnegation, devotion); the good mother, who responds to the child's necessities, before the counter-model of a bad mother as an anomalous situation (Badinter, 1991: 264). According to Goffman (1998: 14), it is equivalent to a stigma, to a "deteriorated identity", which has related the attribution to the stereotype, preserving a bond between them. The usual interchange, pre-established by society that perceives it as natural, has fixed the categories in such manner that the social identity, which does not correspond to normative expectations, has been transformed into demands (Goffman, 1998: 12). The transmitted social information projects the image that, in the supposition of a discredited interaction, breaks the image of the good mother (Goffman, 1998: 83). The model of a good mother is consolidated and institutionalized, strengthening its discourse until it is imposed in Europe, heavily marked by Catholicism.

The government¹, Church, and medicine have preserved the discourse of the sacred and natural duty of motherhood before the perspective of academic knowledge and the feminist movement which boosted a progressive change in the conception of it as the women's supreme end (Bock and Thane, 1996: 36). Motherhood was co-substantial to femininity, it constituted something natural until the debate was opened, and the historic-social circumstances have changed it. Hence, during XIX century and part of XX motherhood was unquestionable. As a matter of fact school subjects were introduced to instruct mothers, ignorance damaged and harmed their role; besides, doctors advised mothers (Ehrenreich, 1990). As from the 1970's

¹ In this respect Bock and Thane (1996: 244) refer that: "it is unquestionable that policies... are to a large extent transnational: they appeared in all of the countries here dealt with —Sweden, Norway, Great Britain, France, Spain, Italy and Germany— and mainly come from a discourse where the interest for the quantity and quality of the population and the mothers' responsibility in this respect prevailed. In all Europe there was a fall in birthrate as from the end of the XIX century, being France where the preoccupation appeared first and more markedly and where said fall started". In France the descent of mortality generated the search for alternatives which potentiate it, so that "the question of *dénatalité* mobilized the energy of a lot of social forces, of parliaments, doctors, demographers and re-populators from every walk of life, who made the necessity of finding solutions in the context of a patriotic and even nationalistic discourse necessary.

decade when this conception changed before the advancement of feminine protagonism; it is undeniable that the mentality change has notoriously influenced, and birth control was a reflection of the new way of understanding women's identity; the use of contraceptives and abortion were examples of another form of behavior. Despite the official discourse promoted procreation, femininity did not have the exclusive exercise of motherhood (Nash, 1984: 307-340). Thus Bertrand Russell (1965: 135) states:

There is a theory according to which the desire of having children is more common among women than men, however, its proper expression is the exactly the opposite; in a large number of modern marriages, children are a concession of women for men's desire.

Even if the mythical idea of motherhood as a magnificent role granted to women by a divine will is preserved, this myth's origin is ancient and probably it was a means to fight against the species' extinction. It is also possible that in primitive time the struggle for survival granted certain primacy to women. At first men were not aware of the role they have in procreation, so in their judgment, women were in charge of procreating in connivance with the gods. This fact explains the presence of mother-goddesses in all of the religions and mythologies. Nevertheless, it is necessary to specify that those feminine divinities never became main divinities, for religious world, as a cultural product, was masculine. There were not first-line goddesses as the main gods were masculine, even in monotheist religions. This is to say, the makers of culture were men and women, occupied with domestic chores and procreation, were left aside from this culture making. This men's privilege was reflected on all of the cultural manifestations, including mythology and religion.

In the very Christian religion Virgin Mary is appreciated as the mother of Jesus, not because of herself as a person. Mary's cult has not contributed to women's dignifying; on the contrary, it has consolidated the feminine ideal of motherhood, as pious mother, devoted, modest, silent. What is more, a mother that is is a virgin, a grave contradiction, since motherhood

and virginity exclude each other. All is due to the Christian association of sex and sin, and as such, it represents the unreachable ideal for every woman. So, the greatest religious feminine representation of the modern occidental world turns out to be a completely impossible ideal, which does not offer options but to chose to be a mother or a virgin. The mother has been the first of the hyperbolic figures of the feminine trinity, erected as an enormous shadow that has pressed the manifestation of its personality.

Socially, the role of women-mother has been exaggerated, and as for their relation with the child it does not seem to be true that women have the maternal “instinct” or maternal necessity developed. An instance of this is, all of the time, they try to find ways to avoid pregnancy, a fact detected in humanity's different civilizations. This demonstrates that the women's sanctified image as mothers is not very authentic. That fake idol cannot last and continue underestimating women as people, consecrating the merely biologic, which does not difference them from any other female mammal, which constitutes nothing but an unexpected accident and a limitation. Motherhood and childcare is still an “issue of women” in many places of the world; for some men it is a proof of their virility. This situation represents a disadvantage for them, as they are forced to fulfill the duties of childcare, which limits their field of action, their time for professional work, suppresses their creativity and eliminates them from competence.

Some data on the formation for motherhood

As from the XVIII, in Spain, the moral perceptions on the natural duties of a mother were stressed, it was on her that children's care and breastfeeding fell, however, this discourse clashed with reality and the frequent resource of wet nurses (Ortega and Pérez, 2002: 291-307). Even if the hygienist theories started in the illustrated century, it was in the next century when they reached the most diffusion. Doctors of the XIX century, in their attempts to unveil pathological processes, stressed the influence of the environmental, socio-economic and cultural factors to determine the evolution of certain diseases, and the traditional uses that loaded with ignorance provoked infantile mortality were questioned. The tenacious

resistance of some families to incorporate new practices and banish tradition, i.e., the generational opposition to use hygienic measures did not favor infancy health, as the habit's force was stronger. Moreover, medicine contributed with its pseudo-scientific argumentations to the identification: woman and motherhood (Aresti, 2000: 363-394). The medical strata spread the discourse configuring a series of patterns and regulations on motherhood, women's *par excellence* social function. In the referred century divulgation works started to be issued, diverse works which show or testify the interest of the hygienist tradition and its importance for the history of medicine and health, and in this case they account for mothers' formation (Bolufer, 2000: 26-45). The creation of the Academy of Hygiene of Catalonia (Academia de Higiene de Catalunya) in 1887 contributed to found the hygienist doctrine in Spain, unfolding an intensive and extensive pedagogic task; by the end of the XIX century the propagation of the ideal of a good mother at European level began, as well as the message of maternal lactation (Hinojosa and Martínez, 2005: 81).

Preoccupation for health and infancy attention were the key elements of the development of motherhood-logy, discipline interested in the cares for the pregnant women and the protection of the children, product of the application of the "redeeming hygienist" ideas. Didactic works on hygiene, nourishment and mothers' sanitary care in pregnancy, birth and lactation, as well as feeding and hygiene of the newly born were published, performing a labor of popular diffusion in an attempt to make women aware of the new parameters. Let us not forget feminine illiteracy rates, women were the part of population with the most illiteracy indexes (Ruiz, 1992: 99), ignorance that also affected their maternal functions, being ruled by routine and habits from the past. According to the specialists, undernourishment, rickets and high mortality rates were due to the abandonment of maternal feeding. This caused the defense of lactation before the mercenary or artificial lactation, the dangers of non-maternal lactation for children were stressed (González, 2005: 92-93); nonetheless, payment to wet nurses for lactation among wealthy strata was frequent in the XIX century and in the first third of the XX in Spain (González Canalejo, 2001: 331-348).

Motherhood's sublimation contrasted with the idea of idea of ignorant, incompetent, unqualified for the function of mother which they had exclusively held. As from the early XX century, in the Spanish case, women would need to be advised by specialists in order to develop their role in an adequate manner. Normally, the specialists were men, as the delay in knowledge in feminine university majors, altogether with the public restriction men exercised on women prevented the women's voices on motherhood from being heard (Nash, 2000a: 696). Despite this marginalization and gagging in relation to their own identity, there were collectives of women which questioned and debated, thus generating an opinion trend. Among these groups there were the midwives who as professionals ever since the end of the XIX century, developed a policy of hygiene associated to motherhood².

Notwithstanding, doctors had a decisive intervention in the projection of motherhood as social feminine duty. From biological motherhood to the social one intended to achieve social welfare, the professionals of medicine, mostly men, expressed hygienic patterns on motherhood and the cares children had to receive (Nash, 2000a: 689). It was motherhood-logy the guarantor of the race's hygiene and the right performance of biological motherhood. The perfect mother was that who gave birth to her children in the best conditions of health and hygiene, as well as that who provided the best cares. A discourse of domesticity which defended motherhood at the time it made the lack of women's formation and their lack of capacity and knowledge evident, and that they needed a series of orientations so that they could fulfill their task adequately.

² Journals were the spokespersons of this feminine professional group. The midwives will spread the policy of maternal hygiene by means of *El Eco de las Matronas* (*The Echo of the Midwives*) Illustrated professional journal of births, women's diseases, proper of first infancy and popular hygiene (1893) and *La mujer y la higiene* (*Woman and Hygiene*), fortnight journal devoted to mothers, wet nurses, female surgeons, nurses, etc and in general to women in her relation to medicine and hygiene (1905). In this journal's pages in addition to a series of hygienist indications, women's rights were defended, thus introducing the gender discourse.

In this sense, it is necessary to underscore that the doctors, worried about infantile health, carried out empirical researches which required mothers (Guigou, 1907; Guigou, 2004; González, 2004: 9-28; Aleixandre, 1916: 41). Besides, they diffused their studies, as the objective was to educate mothers, teach them hygienic measures and care in order to avoid infantile mortality, due to the high percentage of casualties occurred in that time³. The contents were adapted to those circumstances and evidenced an endless number of beliefs and practices of popular medicine, which lacking asepsis were responsible for the death of many children. They were ruled by customs, kept alive by oral tradition, transmitted from generation to generation, and caused the learning of prejudices and errors, many of them preserved in rural zones until halfway the XX century.

With the discourse on sanitary education, it was sought to eliminate the old practices of traditional culture rooted in infantile cares and lactation, as well as to avoid the infectious-contagious diseases and casualties. Precepts and advice were defended according to the hygienist trend, effective by then, which insisted on the “art of raising children”, feminine object of learning (González Canalejo, 2001). The very Concepción Arenal fostered the formation of women inspired by the ideal of motherhood (Ballarín, 2001: 69). Nursery, formerly an extension of domestic service, was a feminine activity (Ballarín, 2001: 67), and as from the last third of the XIX century until the first one of the XX century, it was the base of academic education of many a feminine professionals (nurses and wet nurses) who made the most of the midwives’ accumulated knowledge. Even Concepción Arenal had stated the establishment of a National School of Childcare Culture (Escuela Nacional de Puericultura), which in addition to prepare expert professionals, guaranteed the formation of midwives, nurses and nannies. The *Gotas de Leche* (milk drops) doctors offices for newly born children and in lactation of the pediatric dispensaries, carried out a crucial social and preventive labor, and became at the time the embryo of the schools of

³ The doctor Concepción Aleixandre wrote: “woman has been born to take care of children... in her hand there is a very main element of the race regeneration, as it is a very serious error to think the culture of mothers can be improvised”.

Childcare Culture. However, childcare culture evolved to preventive medicine, and the advancement of pediatrics is to be found in the promulgation of the first laws of protection to infancy, which appeared in Spain in 1904. Even if the project by Concepción Arenal dates back from the 1870's decade, the School of Childcare Culture (*Escuela de Puericultura*⁴) was not founded until 1926 (Bernabeu and Gascón, 1999: 11-35). Later on, these institutions started to appear in diverse places of Spain, unfolding a distinguishable work, teaching maternal knowledge and teaching specialized education.

In this sense, it is worth distinguishing the pedagogical activity of the doctor Amparo Poch y Gascón, who worried about the ignorance of Spanish women, especially about the delay and poverty of the popular sectors, taught maternity, childcare, sexuality and hygiene topics (Rodrigo, 2002: 61). In October 1929, she opened a medical office especially devoted to women and children in Zaragoza; years later, in October 1935, she established in Madrid a Medical Clinic for women and children (Rodrigo, 2002: 59 and 79). The vital trajectory of this doctor, born in Zaragoza in 1902 and who died in Toulouse (France) in 1968, was inscribed into an intense activity devoted to spread knowledge on motherhood and childcare.⁵ The lack of culture of the working strata, marked by their precarious conditions of social and economic life, induced her to advice people on the cares and hygiene the mother and newly born children should receive. From her position she was committed to spread the basic knowledge for women; she tried to break traditional beliefs in order to eradicate taboos and superstitions, as popular knowledge was part of quotidian practices. The diffusing and formative labor was channeled by means of talks and diverse publications such as the ones we present: Handbook of advice for mothers⁶ (*Cartilla de*

⁴ Regulation approved by Royal Decree on May 23rd, 1923.

⁵ Amparo Poch y Gascón was proposed for Minister of Health in 1936, however the civil war cut her destiny, such as that of many Spanish people and was exiled to France; she was military doctor in campaign and blood hospitals.

⁶ In the dedicatory of the Handbook of Advice for Mothers (*Cartilla de Consejos a las Madres*) she wrote: “for all women who have been told nothing on their motherhood, but sometimes — too low— is a shame; and others —too loud— is glory. I dedicate all of them these lines bare of scientific ostentation”.

Consejos a las Madres (Poch, 1931), Child (*Niño*) (Poch, undated), Woman's sexual life (*La vida sexual de la mujer*) (Poch, 1932), among other. We distinguish that the *Niño* pamphlet had great diffusion in Spain⁷, it even worked as a base for a childcare course broadcasted on the radio in 1937 (Rodrigo, 2002: 191-193). An evident proof of the educational and instructive dimension of their contents was the fact that the by-then Mexican ambassador to Spain sent an important volume of *Niño* exemplars to Mexico, so that it was distributed in Mexican schools (Berenguer, 1988: 207).

A great advancement was, undoubtedly, the propagation of hygiene and health in the school sphere, as in Spanish schools in the early XX century were infection sources, as they did not have the evident minimum hygienic conditions (Moreno and Viñao, 2000). All of this altogether with the educational progressivism and the new thought trends which were inscribed in the substantial change in the way of looking at the children (Ballester, 1998: 72-78). Public power was not worried by school infantile population and ignored the precarious life regime the school children had, with nourishment problems and suffering from multiple diseases, which caused a high mortality index.

Learning to be mothers

We do not disregard that education has modeled women's life, and in this sense it was oriented to those facets the current social order associated them with (Vico, 2000: 219-228). Already from the end of the XIX century, in the books on women's education, formation as mothers was introduced (Panadés, 1877: 6-11), an unavoidable function (Friedan, 1965: 1).⁸ Such orientations varied according to social origin, and women were reminded

⁷ The authoress, Antonina Rodrigo (2002: 191), states "*Niño* is a guidance of first cares mothers should provide the newly born, biological marvel and center of the familial universe [...] *Niño* pamphlet is much more than childcare culture. It could be a book on tenderness, or for instance, a tale that children could read at schools in order to learn the origin of the embryo which makes us human beings".

⁸ Friedan refers to that "set of ideas which contribute to make women divine as wife and mother, this is to say, as a female animal rather than human being".

which their maternal obligations were without removing them from their strata. Let us remember that in a classist and hierarchical society, the regime of life and the customs varied in accordance with the different sectors and because of that several authors defined the respective role (Panadés, 1877-1978). The debate was located on biological motherhood and the role of women in upbringing and education of their children. In said context women were educated in relation to the others; in tune with the regenerationist ideas they were instructed to be better housewives and mothers.

Women's education was still far from being considered in reason of itself. The fundamental objective was social regeneration and in order to achieve it, the education of wife, the mother, became a fundamental instrument (Ballarín, 2001: 86).

Women's cultural identity was supported upon domesticity, as in the time's mentality there was a clear differentiation between the social roles of men and women (Bock, 2000: 442). Motherhood and the species perpetuation represented the "supreme mission" of woman, her only destiny and means of self-realization recognized in the cultural patterns. The educational model was restricted and was oriented to household life, as next to that of men, and cut down scientific knowledge (Ballarín, 2000: 628) that, according to the current order, they did not need to assist domestic issues and care for their offspring. For "women's cultural identity is defined, thus, inside the sphere of family, such as the struggle for the dignity of motherhood, mother, wife and administrator of the household" (Nash, 2000: 615).

In Spain the Law of Public Instruction of 1857 (*Ley de Instrucción Pública de 1857*) prescribed the teaching of hygiene in primary school, and the first school books were edited as from 1848. It was considered important to indoctrinate school girls in domestic knowledge and hygiene applied to future motherhood. Thus, later, in 1901 the obligatoriness of these contents in primary school was established (Marañón, 1987: 31), even if its application had to undergo difficulties as the educational reality was very precarious and tripped over a lot of obstacles, such as the lack of material, resources,

ignorance of the very teachers, etc, and the old school could not train these teachings as the Schools of Teachers had neither taught this knowledge. Certainly, the education of Spanish girls for motherhood was disastrous; it presented a deficit panorama and a notorious delay in respect to Europe (Marín, 2002: 157-194). The regulation established a specific school curriculum: Teachings for the Household, and through formal education subjects and contents which prepared girls for their future life were introduced, they reinforced their formation for domestic life and motherhood, with the aim to popularize maternal attention and instrument childcare. It was sought that from school they receive preparation for motherhood, following a program which trained them as little mothers, thus breaking ignorance, manipulated morality and superstitions on motherhood and child upbringing. The editorial did not overlook the objectives of maternal learning, being published a large volume of texts. Hence, schools manuals taught girls (Esteban, 1927), and the older women were instructed by means of magazines and books. They learnt to be mothers, they acquired knowledge on motherhood-logy and childcare in order to overcome their natural ignorance and become perfect mothers.⁹

Childcare culture started to be considered a basic discipline in the curriculum and was aimed to extend its teaching to the feminine educational centers, so as to provide maternal formation to girls and adults, from primary schools to the teachers' schools, including the institutes (Miguel, 1984: 20).

⁹ In the preface of the school handbook *Madres Chiquitas* (Small mothers), the objectives of the divulgation of maternal instruction were made explicit: "every profession is preceded by learning; the profession of a mother is the only one for which women are not instructed. So, elemental notions on childcare must be included as obligatory, even in primary schools, for the working class leaves school at 12 or 14 years of age, later they do not find the occasion to learn said instructions; not expecting that family and neighborhood prejudices are those which guide the children's upbringing, at the time of being a mother, for these prejudices are hard to leave: teaching it at schools, it could not be said that the ignorance of mothers is one of the main causes of infantile mortality. We are convinced that it will be easier for the National lady professors to teach notions of childcare culture and for the girls to learn them than Geography and History basics.

The effects of the postulates of the new schools were noticed in the instruction of future mothers, and it was recommended that girl schools were the renovation point¹⁰ of old ideas, introducing new knowledge through Domestic Economy lessons (Sensat, 1922: 288). What is more, the schools of childcare spread all over the Spanish state provided formation to women, since women from an early age were taught in the schools, and young women with courses and talks, which fomented the diffusion of knowledge and made it reach all of the social sectors.

Separately, Margarita Nelken,¹¹ Spanish politician, socialist representative and writer, also considered the importance of educating future mothers, aware of the precarious knowledge and absurd beliefs, distorted by religion and moral the Spanish women had (Nelken, 1926). Her pedagogical purpose was stated in a leaflet devoted to motherhood-logy and childcare, convinced of the benefits of an objective and rational education.¹²

It is worth noticing that in Spain the discourse on obligatory motherhood persisted despite some attempts to disassociate it; nonetheless, it was reinforced after the Spanish Civil War and the imposition of the military dictatorship. The Feminine Section of the Phalanx, organization of women led by Pilar Primo de Rivera, was in charge of designing the women model in accordance with the postulations of the regime (González, 2001: 369-

¹⁰ Rosa Sensat (1922) insisted on: "Everything that can be alleged about its usefulness of the importance of that teaching from the social and familial point of view to recommend its insertion in schools, being of great value cannot move the spirit of the educators as the consideration of making entering into it a breath of life, an alien element with enough moving force to remove that static set and oblige in the whole content of school work a new way of work and acting based on a spontaneous and productive activity.

¹¹ Margarita Nelken (Madrid, 1896 - Mexico, 1968); authoress of several works, at early age became interested in the problems of women; enrolled in the Socialist Party, she was representative for Badajoz in three legislatures; in 1939, after the Civil War she exiled herself to Mexico, where she died.

¹² In this respect Margarita Nelken wrote: "... used to considering the most natural acts of life as something shameful, they reach marriage and motherhood in a state of ill-learned knowledge from novels read into hiding, from conversations with perverted friends, etc, i.e., thinking of what they should not think of, and on the contrary, ignoring what their tasks will be and the responsibility they accept when they take them" (Nelken, 1926: 9).

386). Women were fundamental for the dictatorship of General Franco, biologically reproduced the species, however at ideological level also had a crucial role reproducing the ideological discourse under the attentive look of Fascism.¹³ As people's educators they diffuse the political postulates and claims, the very same they received through formal and informal education. Several mechanisms of indoctrination and diffusion were used (courses, conferences, publications), they were instructed in function of the assigned role.¹⁴ "From the first grades until the last, our girls are educated for the household, then, to be mothers and wives", Alfonso Iniesta wrote in 1943 (in the *Educación Nacional* magazine), he was by-then inspector of primary education and National Adviser of Education. Also the central inspector of primary education Adolfo Maíllo (1943) expressed "in the fundamentals of a national education":

For the empowering of the maternal feeling, which already starts to manifest in early ages, feminine school will draw to educational techniques unsuspected by liberal intellectualism. For such end every school will have a doll, with which the female students will practice elemental childcare... by means of games with the doll notions of feeding hygiene, sleep, skin and states of sickness, et cetera will be taught so that the girls will gladly learn and almost unaware ideas which otherwise will find arid.

¹³ Mercedes Werner wrote in *Medina*, journal of the Feminine Section (April 3rd, 1941): "A woman can only serve Spain as a woman, as educator of children and men, even though she contributes to this education from an office desk. Not only must they be those who help, but also those who inspire, suggest, if it is possible, from heart to heart".

¹⁴ Mercedes Suárez-Valdés, diffuser of the feminine section, wrote in *The ideal mother* (1951): "Since we were child we liked them and we are a bit of a mom, first our dolls, how we took care of them! Such love we gave them! All of us have washed and combed, made their little dresses and talk to them as real mothers, exactly imitating the language and cares of our mothers... The sort of ideal mother is for almost everyone the mother who stays up late because of her children from their birth, devoting herself to their care, she raises and assists them, sacrificing everything, and then she educates them morally and spiritually making them honest, honorable, Christian and patriotic men and women"

The State did not restricted efforts, fomenting and controlling motherhood from a paternalist stance, as it doubted women's capacities. In such manner that revaluing domestic space, as girls they were taught to be mothers, women were the household and being a good woman meant to be a good mother.

Make women conscious mothers, professionals of motherhood, in the dual sense they docilely acquire and assume that such was their sole mission and thus they were in the need of specific knowledge which was necessary and urgent to assimilate (Palacio, 2003: 11).

In this time the recovery of the traditional values defended in the XIX century by conservative governments; although in the postwar years the participation and collaboration of women in the country's reconstruction, in their task they can not stop being feminine, thus it was reflected on the Law of Primary Education of 1945 (*Ley de Enseñanza Primaria de 1945*) and in the Plans of Study for Teachers of 1945 and 1950 (*Planes de Estudio de Magisterio de 1945 y 1950*). The professions they can perform were those which projected tenderness, devotion, help, understanding... being found among them childcare culture, teaching and pedagogy. From here the feminization of the teaching career, a profession recommended since the XIX century, as the formation of female teachers was influenced by the feminine model which later they would project at school. Female teachers were taught to teach girls to be women; a feminine educational model designed in accordance with the postulations of the political and social regime prevailing in that time. The teacher profession was influenced by the socio-political change produced by the beginning of the civil war and the ideological interests of the National-Catholicism. The Schools of Teachers supported by the traditionalist and catholic ideology gave lessons that responded to the religious, moral, patriotic life and the ideal of wife, mother and organizer of the household. There was not a lot of interest in their acquisition of intellectual knowledge; therefore, they received careful instruction which enabled them to be professionals of the household and family. This household professional's formation required similar knowledge,

which consolidated and enriched their preparation, since they had as a mission to educate future feminine generations. This is to say, the role of the female teachers was in agreement with the qualities girls were required. Thus, there was the need for the primary school taught girls, and consequently teachers, *Teachings for the Household*. Didactic materials reinforced instruction for domestic life (Ruiz, 1957) and motherhood¹⁵, inducing and indoctrinating girls as little women, in the fashion of “little mothers”, in addition to inoculate their minds with the ideological values of the dictatorial regime.¹⁶

With the ideologization of motherhood the difference and recognition of a role proper to women was reinforced (Dühr, 1954). Their function was oriented toward domestic ends or tasks derived from their own condition.¹⁷ The maternal function implied an affective and educational link, nevertheless at the time, disassociated the roles of mother and father. Men and women teachers, likewise, were indoctrinated following identical postulates; we insert a fragment of a text we have gathered from a Questionnaire:

At the household, the mother is like the permanent sacrifice to achieve the wellbeing of the family. Whereas, the father, head of family, works on what is proper to his profession and earns money in order to support the family needs, the mother does not remain idle, but she is occupied with its internal

¹⁵ The authoress Matilde Ruiz was inspector of Primary Teaching and BA in Philosophy and Literature Studies, and elaborated a book with readings for girls, with illustrations and texts oriented to domestic life. The next passage is an instance of the contents: “Woman is the soul and life of the household, therefore, of the peoples and nations”.

¹⁶ Xenophobia was one of the regime’s values, that considered as own was exalted, whereas the rest was despised. Not even women escaped from that attitude and belief. The national professor Rafael Gil Serrano (1947), in *Nueva Visión de la Hispanidad*, stated: “Hispanic women is the completed model of Mothers, who cares with exquisite tenderness for their children, not because they are fruit of their love and parts of her heart, but for they are souls created by God in his own bosom and living temple of the Holy Spirit”.

¹⁷ Durh (1954) wrote: “Man was born for physical or spiritual fatherhood, to evoke, create, order; woman, on the contrary, is oriented with all her being toward physical or spiritual motherhood, to stimulate, help, support, encourage.

government, profession which is hers by her own right, since administration, as a function proper to those who have good sense and are able to distribute what they have, provides certain prestige, from which housewife must not be deterred. Likewise, the set of the household and the commodity of the family claims for it, as indubitably mother has, normally, more economy instinct, more taste and more capacity than man as for the household administrative regime.¹⁸

Separately, textbooks were the transmitters of the current ideology and roles; they marked the preparation of future female school teachers, which at the same time were in charge of the girls' formation for domestic life. In the pedagogical manuals chapters referred to family were introduced under the heading Familial and Household pedagogy:¹⁹ "Feminine education, as specialization, will comprehend physical exercises, labor, tailoring, and childcare culture notions and household science". Even in the scientific encounters specific teachings on domestic formation and maternal education of women were insisted on (Bohígas, 1941; Bolinaga, 1952). Likewise, textual iconography collects abundant illustrations of the maternal role so as to reinforce the contents.

To the extent society evolved the teachings and other alternatives for feminine education become solid, however, they were not freed from domestic chores, which they must make compatible with professional activities. Despite educational options are broadened, these will have a classist orientation, daughter of wealthy families could access intellectual formation, not so those from lower strata, who are oriented toward manual or mechanical activities which do not require exercising the mind. Motherhood has been consubstantial to femininity, constituted something natural until the debate began to be opened and the historic-social circumstances have made it change. In the XX century the belief that reduced women to the exclusive biological function was put to an end, it was recognized that they have contributed to the social becoming and have

¹⁸ Answers to the Special Questionnaire of Oppositions to Directions of School Groups, written by the Council of Publications of the Magisterio Español editions. Madrid, 1950.

¹⁹ Pedagogy topics, Madrid: Escuela Española, 1941

controlled procreation (Kristeva, 2000: 11). The rights of the mothers and fighting for motherhood dignity were some of the demands of the women movements (Bock, 2000: 442), demands which were achieved in the development of the welfare States, even though in several occasions they were translated into protection reforms (paternity), rather than in the materialization of maternal rights (Bock, 2000: 443).

Political leaders rarely systematized economic, political and social rights of mothers; they were instead isolated legislative facts. Women's movements did not ignore the problems of mothers, even those whose fathers have forgotten their children, and attempted measures in order to favor them. Feminists insisted that "motherhood is a social function" and not an individual or private function (Bock, 2000: 453). At the early XX century policies and actions were started for the recognition of motherhood (Bock, 2000: 448), nonetheless, it is true that maternal feminism would be absent in the claims of the XX-century second half, as it was focused on claiming working spaces and redistributing responsibilities in private life.²⁰

Final comments

Motherhood has had its own history, the moments differ, it undergoes transformation, it has not been static, neither universal nor timeless; in continuous evolution, mothers from the past have nothing to do with those from today. Hence, we can refer to motherhood as a diverse cultural construction, defined for each epoch, marked by history and culture. In this way, the meaning of motherhood has been subjected to variations, it has not remained immovable, it has suffered mutations along humanity's history following society's evolutive line. As from the end of the XIX and the first decades of the XX different States in Occidental Europe put a social policy of protection to motherhood in practice; in this very context the so-called

²⁰ Vera Brittain (1953), in her autobiography, stated that "women have become ends on their own and not merely means for men's ends. The Welfare State has been at the time cause and consequence of the second great change due to which women have changed from rivalry with men to a new recognition of their unique value as women".

“maternal feminism” appeared, which claimed rights for mothers, and considered motherhood as their social function, argument supported on the fact that domestic life was women’s responsibility; i.e., taking care of the household and children. The division of remunerated and unremunerated labor is rejected; however, the difference of roles and spaces (public and private) was accepted. The welfare State facilitated better services for women and permitted more autonomy. By the end of the XIX century divulgation works started to be issued, a diversity of works that show or witness the interest of the hygienist tradition and its importance for the history of medicine and health, and in this case for the mothers’ formation. Motherhood and the preservation of the species represented the “supreme mission” of any woman, her only destiny and means of self-realization recognized in the cultural patterns. In this sense, the prevailing mentality in respect to motherhood appears as a key element in the definition of feminine roles and expectations.

The traditional discourse has attributed women the roles of wives and mothers as obligatory functions, it was so in the XX century; nonetheless, the medical class contributed to preserve the ideal model of mother, spreading a series of patterns and regulations on motherhood, social function *par excellence* of women. The fear of the breaking of the traditional role provoked, spurred by their responsibilities, roles, labors and occupations. Undoubtedly doctors had a decisive intervention in the projection of motherhood as a feminine social duty, carriers of knowledge and truth, besides, they forcefully draw a single model of women. Their didactical and diffusing preoccupations impacted on the feminine population which was far from the maternal-infantile knowledge. Medical discourses did not help to emancipate women nor did they open new horizons; on the contrary, they arose guilt in women when they broke the classical model. From biological motherhood to the social one projected on achieving social welfare, the professionals of medicine, mostly men, would give hygienic patterns on motherhood and cares children should receive.

The confluence of medicine, religion and school, or namely, the medical, moral, or pedagogical discourse, maintained the traditional model fomenting

the women-mother model and it was necessary to educate in such sense. A traditional discourse was also maintained in more progressive sectors, liberals included, motive which made them claim the rights of women as mothers. It was about instructing girls and women from an early age into that which was considered their mission, starting from their ignorance and incapacity. Hence, save exceptions, motherhood was unquestionable; nevertheless, as from the 1970's this perspective changes before the advancement of feminism. It is undeniable that the change of mentality has notoriously influenced, and birth control reflects a new way of understanding women's reality; the use of contraceptives and abortion are examples of other behavior manners. Despite the official discourse promoted procreation, femininity does not carry the exclusive exercise of motherhood.

In quotidian life the relief from domestic chores and the mutation of familial spaces has been a logical consequence of society's evolution. However, women's liberation has not redeemed them from motherhood, in spite of the social progresses, legislative advancements, science evolution, etc, they will continue giving birth. This natural process of our species has not been transformed for despite everything women will be the mothers of humanity. An irreplaceable and absorbing social destiny, although now alleviated by different nature resources; even if we recognize motherhood in several occasions it makes it difficult professional development, this is the reason why there are still notorious differences with men, mainly when projecting their "genius". Notwithstanding, it is true that currently motherhood, helped by the progress of science, is imposed as one of the essential feminine vocations (desired, accepted and realized) and it is part of the singular realization of many women, at the time, through it, the contributions of women to the world's plurality are undeniable.

As a conclusion, saying that motherhood has undergone modifications, from the current look the social imaginary has been diversified, it refers to responsible motherhood and the affective bonds, the relation of the child with the mother, when in a large part of history of humanity maternal love has been absent. Biology is not learnt, yet the feelings are indeed product of learning. Motherhood is uneven and diverse; there are multiple ways of

motherhood; motherhood in popular sectors is far from the wealthy one, and far from the Occidental boundaries it is different; the example of the single mothers in Afro-Caribbean cultures can be mentioned. To this we can add the open debate on hiring mothers, alternative motherhood, biological mothers, adoptive mothers, naturalized mother, denaturalized ones... having a child does not necessarily means being a mother, for one can be a mother without blood bonds.

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