

Abigail Lee Six

*Changing Models of Motherhood? Hideous Progeny and Mother-Blame in Ana García-Siñeriz, Esas mujeres rubias (2011)*

A great statue or picture grows under the power of the artist as a child in the mother's womb, and the very mind which directs the hands in formation is incapable of accounting to itself for the origin, the gradations, or the media of the process.<sup>1</sup>

*Esas mujeres rubias* (2011) [Those Blonde Women] is a Spanish novel that gives a mother's first-person account of her life to date, including the loss of her only daughter, Alma, at the age of fourteen to a condition called Diamond-Blackfan anemia.<sup>2</sup> It is quite a long and complex novel, with several themes woven into different strands of the story, including, for example, a substantial sub-plot concerning the family that owns the house that the narrator-protagonist, called María, is renting at the time of writing. It also includes intertextual references to Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (1911), which she is translating into Spanish and to whose author she feels a special affinity owing to Burnett's loss of an adolescent child of her own.<sup>3</sup> Our narrator's choice of text to translate is presented as fortuitous, for she undertakes the work spontaneously, having happened upon a copy of the book in the house. It provides García-Siñeriz with an extended metaphorical network throughout the novel, which goes beyond its author's bereavement and which there is no need to detail here. However, other texts might have been placed in María's path instead, with equally powerful resonances. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, for example, has been suggestively associated with that author's complex and problematic relationship with motherhood.<sup>4</sup> Shelley had to deal with the knowledge that she had caused her own mother's death (something Hodgson Burnett's character, Colin, in *The Secret Garden* also has to confront). At least as importantly, though, she had recently lost a child of her own when she wrote the text for which she is best remembered and which she called her 'hideous progeny' in her prologue to the 1831 edition. As this illustrates, metaphors of parenthood for authorship have a long pedigree and have been used by both male and female writers, but in different ways and with different implications, which are further inflected by the gender of the reader.<sup>5</sup> García-Siñeriz does not establish an explicit parallel of this kind for her

---

Abigail Lee Six, *Changing Models of Motherhood? Hideous Progeny and Mother-Blame in Ana García-Siñeriz, Esas mujeres rubias (2011)*

*Studies in the Maternal*, 5(2), 2013, [www.mamsie.bbk.ac.uk](http://www.mamsie.bbk.ac.uk)

protagonist, but as we shall see in the conclusion, it has suggestive implications for our understanding of her attitude to motherhood if we consider her translation in this light.

Notwithstanding these and other elements present in *Esas mujeres*, at its core is the story of the narrator's own bereavement – its causes and its effects – and inextricably bound up with this is a depiction of changing models of motherhood across three generations and a wide class spectrum showing steep upward mobility. María's maternal grandmother, Anselma is illiterate, married to a fisherman, and the daughter of a travelling pedlar. Carmela, her mother, living in the Madrid of the Franco years, is a hairdresser whose husband is a qualified paramedic. The narrator, in the present day, has a brother who has become a diplomat and she is the wife of a fashionable and successful architect.<sup>6</sup>

This article will compare the experiences and attitudes of the three women towards motherhood, exploring the presentation of mother-blame in the novel to try to determine whether these fictional characters reflect a constant in our cultural conceptualization of motherhood or, on the contrary, a phenomenon which has either gained or lost traction over time. In other words, do the changes in models that we see in the novel emerge as cosmetic or do they suggest that the blaming of mothers has evolved significantly?<sup>7</sup> Whilst every country – indeed, every community – has its cultural specificities and it would be simplistic to pretend that these do not inflect attitudes to motherhood as well as everything else, this article will attempt to look beyond these to certain transnational and cross-class constants which coalesce around the idea of mother-blame, an approach which arguably reflects the thrust of the novel itself, whose narrator feels a far stronger bond to Frances Hodgson Burnett than to the elegant wives of her husband's colleagues, who ostensibly are from the same Madrilenian middle class and age group. To that extent, the novel fits within a Western European trend of contemporary women's writing identified by Adalgisa Giorgio, who observes 'that both the writers and their characters conceive of themselves as existing within wider cultural referents than just the ones of their culture of origin.'<sup>8</sup>

As far as the plot of *Esas mujeres rubias* is concerned, the three women have had very different experiences of mothering and motherhood: Anselma bore seven children in a remote fishing-village, of whom Carmela was the last and the only survivor, since the first six all died of an unidentified illness in their infancy.<sup>9</sup> Carmela, a seemingly strong and self-confident woman, is an urban working mother who has raised two healthy children: first a son, Jaime, her favourite, and then her daughter, our narrator, María. María's childhood and adolescence are blighted by a

---

Abigail Lee Six, *Changing Models of Motherhood? Hideous Progeny and Mother-Blame in Ana García-Siñeriz, Esas mujeres rubias* (2011)

difficult relationship with her mother and many insecurities. Despite these, she meets and marries the ambitious and upwardly mobile Fernando, and all bodes well for them until their child's disability and concomitant short life expectancy are discovered. As a result, she sacrifices both developing a career of her own and in the end, even keeping her marriage together, in order to prioritize looking after her ailing daughter full-time. The treatment programme precludes a normal life for both mother and child: the latter needs an average of twelve stays in hospital per year and home-schooling for example.

Considered rationally on the basis of information provided in the novel, all three women have tried to be good mothers in their different circumstances just as much as their husbands have tried to be good fathers. Therefore, it seems beyond dispute that none of the six parents deserves to be blamed for what has gone wrong with their respective children's lives. Yet at a more emotional level, the reader is aware of a heavy burden of guilt carried by all three mothers but none of the fathers; as far as we can tell, there is an imbalance that is all too easy to internalize without challenge. To that extent, Anselma, Carmela and María seem to reflect the experience of real-life mothers; indeed, we can find ample evidence to support the contention that 'although fathers *are* quite important for the success or failure of their children, mothers are *seen* as ultimately responsible for the way their children turn out'.<sup>10</sup>

This statement dating from 2005 demonstrates that little has changed since Nancy Chodorow and Susan Contratto first drew attention to the power and endurance of mother-blame. They assert: 'Both nineteenth-century cultural ideology and post-Freudian psychological theory blame mothers for any failings in their children'.<sup>11</sup> Other research, such as that of Elisabeth Badinter, dates the phenomenon back much further.<sup>12</sup> As for why this should be the case, Chodorow and Contratto's research and that of many other scholars have accounted for the prevalence of mother-blame—coming from both men and women, feminists and anti-feminists—on the basis of 'infantile fantasies [of maternal omnipotence] and a culturally child-centered perspective'.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, whilst female writers are thriving in contemporary Spain and mothers loom large in many novels, it is far easier to find them and their role viewed critically from the child's perspective than from the inside looking out.<sup>14</sup> The psychoanalytic discourse in this area is complex and will not be addressed in this article; suffice it to say, by way of introduction, that it seems plausible that the common human experience of being mothered has driven the development of ideas about motherhood that are embedded in areas as diverse as the religious doctrine and public health policies, all of which will be central to this article. When

---

Abigail Lee Six, *Changing Models of Motherhood? Hideous Progeny and Mother-Blame in Ana García-Siñeriz, Esas mujeres rubias* (2011)

mothers internalize these blaming discourses—and there are few accessible alternatives for them to choose from— guilt is bound to be the result, as Adrienne Rich, for example, acknowledges, when she refers to what she calls ‘the chaining [to the institution of motherhood] of women in links of love and guilt.’ In imagining what drove one particular woman to infanticide, she writes:

She became a scapegoat, the one around whom the darkness of maternity is allowed to swirl – the invisible violence of the institution of motherhood, the guilt, the powerless responsibility for human lives, the judgements and condemnation, the fear of her own power, the guilt, the guilt, the guilt.<sup>15</sup>

Lucía Etxebarria and Goyo Bustos’s co-authored *El club de las malas madres* [‘The Bad Mothers’ Club’] serves as testimony that in 2009, when it was published, the same guilt was still being heaped upon mothers in Spanish parenting manuals, which were judged to be ‘excessively blaming towards the mother, upon whom they loaded, needless to say, all the responsibility—if not blame—for the children’s problems or failures.’<sup>16</sup>

*Esas mujeres rubias*, however, is about a specific type of mother and mothering, focusing on when a child is disabled, which leads to another area of research needing to be taken into account: disability studies. Here we find it argued that the cultural meaning of being the mother of a disabled child has evolved over time and that scientific advances and consumer culture have together increased mothers’ sense of blame when they have a disabled child. Gail H. Landsman is worth quoting at some length in this regard, for, although she is drawing on a study conducted in the United States, it seems applicable to the developed world in general and summarizes the basis for mother-blame in secular, modern-day culture, where the contemporary Madrid of María’s experience of mothering arguably fits. It also reiterates implicitly the striking fact that fathers remain unrecognized as half of the production process in the popular imagination and therefore appear to escape blame and self-blame completely:

Reproduction has been culturally understood in the United States as a form of production. [...] In this line of reasoning, mothers of children with disabilities are the producers of defective merchandise. [...] With motherhood now a choice [...] each child born must be ‘worth it’.<sup>17</sup>

All women in the study felt society’s placement of responsibility on them for their child’s disability and some personally accepted a level of ‘blame’.<sup>18</sup>

The study not only demonstrates that mothers’ access to an informed choice allows blame to be placed on them but also contains an implicit assumption that the birth of a child with a disability requires assignment of blame.<sup>19</sup>

Landsman assumes a new and worse situation for mothers of disabled children in the present day, ‘with motherhood now a choice’, but that will be called into question in this article;<sup>20</sup> it will

---

Abigail Lee Six, *Changing Models of Motherhood? Hideous Progeny and Mother-Blame in Ana García-Siñeriz, Esas mujeres rubias* (2011)

be posited, instead, that not only is the matter of choice more than somewhat contentious in practice, but the scientific discourse of secular society—mothers who are castigated for making bad choices such as smoking, drinking, being overweight, too young or too old, too posh to push and the list could go on—is no more pernicious a phenomenon of mother-blame than the religious one over which it has gained ascendancy and that *Esas mujeres rubias* illustrates the point vividly.

Both Anselma and María, as well as their respective husbands, have to deal with the fact that they have produced children who have not survived to adulthood. Anselma's belief system is structured around her Catholic faith, which offers her both comfort and grounds for blame, internalized as self-blame. On the positive side, she can and does attribute the six deaths to God's inscrutable will: "The Lord took them away, without explaining why".<sup>21</sup> She can and does believe her babies have gone straight to heaven (*EMR*, p. 207); and she can and does give them a Christian burial, visit their graves and pray for them, and she has the positive value that Christian tradition places on human suffering generally and the hope that it may be rewarded in the hereafter.<sup>22</sup>

However, that same belief system also entails that God punishes sinners and their offspring; indeed, her own father, killed by a lightning bolt, is seen as having been struck down in punishment for his godlessness (*EMR*, pp. 210-11).<sup>23</sup> So the question implicitly posed for Anselma is: what has she done to deserve such terrible divine retribution and if a just God is punishing her for her father's sins, as Carmela says that she believes (*EMR*, p. 500), does this imply that she does in fact carry some of the blame for them in His eyes? Anselma, we are indeed told, 'took the blame for everything'.<sup>24</sup> This, it seems, is also the whispered verdict in the village community: the local gossips, sympathetic to her fate, 'blamed her under their breath for so much misfortune'.<sup>25</sup> Whilst she may not have had a choice of whether or not to have children and go on having them after each of the first six died, the Christian doctrine of free will crucially gives all human beings a choice between good and evil, a choice over which she may have tortured herself as she examined her conscience and asked herself why God was taking away her children one after the other. As Badinter puts it:

How was a woman to know if she had adequately expiated her sins, sacrificed enough of herself to fulfil her maternal duties? The answer was supplied by her child. Since the child's physical and moral destiny depended entirely upon her, he would be the sign, the living proof of her virtue or vice, her victory or her failure.<sup>26</sup>

---

Abigail Lee Six, *Changing Models of Motherhood? Hideous Progeny and Mother-Blame in Ana García-Siñeriz, Esas mujeres rubias* (2011)

Conversely, no blame or guilt of any kind seems to attach to the children's father. This is of course in keeping with social convention; as Badinter also observes, it provides strong evidence that we are 'encouraged to believe that the *illnesses* or misfortunes of the child are more the mother's doing, her responsibility and concern.'<sup>27</sup>

María, two generations later, also feels guilty when Alma is born and one thumb is found to be missing: 'I rocked her to a one-word lullaby: "sorry..., sorry..., sorry".'<sup>28</sup> But in the absence of religious faith and living in contemporary Madrid, she looks to a different kind of narrative to cope with her daughter's disability and premature death. First of all, it seems logical to assume that the genetic anomaly which has led to Alma's Diamond-Blackfan anemia is the same as the unidentified cause of death of her mother's siblings, meaning that her genes, rather than her husband Fernando's, are the source of the condition. However, such attribution of blame is complicated by the fact that he was raised by a single mother and discloses almost nothing—perhaps out of his own lack of knowledge, perhaps not—about his paternal inheritance. Before and throughout her pregnancy, Carmela had nagged at María to ask Fernando about this and talked about the wisdom of screening couples for any anomalies or incompatibilities before they have children, all of which María ignored (*EMR*, pp. 199-201, 203). This leaves her with plenty of scope to blame herself, her mother, and her grandmother for their and her own genes, but especially herself for not trying to find out more about the cause of the infant deaths in the previous generation before her pregnancy, a premise discussed by Landsman as we have seen. Even though the doctors stress that the condition need not be inherited at all and that even if it has been in Alma's case, it is nobody's fault, María nevertheless believes that it is her biology which has probably sentenced her daughter to an early death, biology about which she might have been able to do something (use a donated egg, have IVF, and then embryos screened to select those without the genetic condition, for example) if she had investigated beforehand. Once again, as in the case of Anselma's husband, there is nothing in the novel to suggest that Fernando is troubled by any feelings of this kind, despite presumably knowing his wife's family history before she fell pregnant too.

What little comfort María can take in her secular context has to come in the first instance from modern science: once Alma has been diagnosed, she and Fernando can and do seek the best medical advice and treatment available. María's own life has been saved by doctors when, after Alma's death, she attempts suicide and she also has some medication that she is using at the time of narration to help her sleep (*EMR*, pp. 240-41). Combined with this, however, she relies

---

Abigail Lee Six, *Changing Models of Motherhood? Hideous Progeny and Mother-Blame in Ana García-Siñeriz, Esas mujeres rubias* (2011)

on age-old strategies. She treasures a box of mementoes, including a pillow-case to which the smell of Alma still clings. She is also helped by the bond she feels that she is forging with that other bereaved mother, Hodgson Burnett, through her appropriation of the text of *The Secret Garden* as she translates it. Finally, we infer that she finds therapeutic value in telling her own story. Notwithstanding the differences between Anselma's and María's experience of bereavement, then, both have to live with a barely tolerable mixture of grief and guilt. Whether the balance of consolatory factors to mitigate the self-blame is weighted equally for the two of them, though, will be considered in the conclusion of this article.

Carmela is perhaps the most complex character in the novel, mainly because María's attitude to her evolves in the course of it and readers therefore need to keep adjusting and re-assessing their opinion of her. At first, she seems irritatingly self-confident and self-satisfied, as well as a social climber. Self-doubt, let alone guilt or self-blame, are nowhere to be seen at this stage. By the end of *Esas mujeres*, however, we understand her very differently: she had been frightened that she would be unable to produce viable children when she was first pregnant and, after they were born, frightened that they might die inexplicably in infancy like her six siblings:

Before Jaime was born, I couldn't sleep. I was so frightened that what had happened to my mother would happen to me. When he was born so fair-complexioned I spent the first three years watching him, staring at him, clinging to him. And then you came along, so different, so dark and nothing like us, it was a relief; I began to think it was over... At home it had never been mentioned; nowadays people talk about everything, to their children, to any stranger, but back then neither my father nor my mother referred to those children except to pray for their little souls or, twice a year, to visit the cemetery, on the Day of the Dead and of the Holy Innocents.<sup>29</sup>

Not only thanks to this belated revelation, but also through easily missed or misinterpreted remarks earlier on in the text, which we now re-assess, it becomes clear that there is a legacy of anxiety and guilt which Carmela must have been carrying all her life. For example, María asserts that 'Mum acted defensively whenever an outsider pried into family history'.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, Carmela reacts angrily when one of Alma's doctors tries to question her (*EMR*, p. 453) and again, when an academic wants to research the life of her grandfather, the pedlar struck by lightning; indeed, María thinks she only agrees to meet the academic because 'she did not dare refuse, out of a strange feeling of guilt'.<sup>31</sup> This guilt-based defensiveness goes some way towards explaining the great importance that Carmela attaches to appearances in general, as María explains: 'For her, a woman, who is not pretty because nature has not bestowed that gift upon her, should at least make an effort to keep up appearances. She defends artifice, trickery, cosmetics. The exact

---

Abigail Lee Six, *Changing Models of Motherhood? Hideous Progeny and Mother-Blame in Ana García-Siñeriz, Esas mujeres rubias* (2011)

opposite to me.<sup>32</sup> This belief in concealing one's perceived weaknesses, whether physical or emotional, was initially presented as a sign of her shallow and pretentious character, but it can now be read more sympathetically as understandable, forgivable, and perhaps most importantly of all, pitiable.

One of the most striking examples of an earlier episode, which we re-assess when we finally gain this psychological insight, dates from when Alma was a newborn baby. Carmela, while verbally playing down the importance of the missing thumb, had arrived to visit with the present of a pair of mittens, on the pretext that all babies wear them so they do not scratch themselves (*EMR*, p. 267). Though unstated, it was clear to the reader and the baby's parents that she wanted Alma's abnormality to be concealed. Since a newborn baby would not be aware of the kinds of stigmatization with which older disabled people have to cope, Carmela could be assumed to be aiming to hide Alma's missing thumb for the sake of her daughter María—and more than likely, herself—to conceal, in other words, what she perceived as the misfortune of having a less than perfect (grand)child. To that extent, her action could be placed in the same category as her unsuccessful attempts when María was a teenager to tame her unruly dark hair (*EMR*, pp. 44-46): then, the perfectly coiffed and blond-haired Carmela had wanted her daughter to fit into culturally determined ideals of feminine attractiveness. Carmela did not encourage her to feel that having dark frizzy hair was not a problem and did not make her inferior to others. Possibly, she thought, then as now with the mittens, that she had María's own best interests at heart, even if in our view she was misguided and self-deluding. More likely, however, she was driven by a sense of her own inferiority as the mother of a girl who did not match up to conventional ideals of beauty.<sup>33</sup> This, at least, is how María appears to have interpreted her motives, for she remarks much later in the novel that Carmela doted on Alma because she at last had the doll to dress up which María had failed to be for her (*EMR*, p. 459). She may also have the vestiges of the religious doctrine of divine retribution being carried down the generations, having been brought up in a devout family; we know there is a crucifix above her bed (*EMR*, p. 44) and she attends midnight mass at Christmas, for example.

Thus, through the presentation of Carmela's attitudes, the novel implicitly shows one area where mothers seem to be especially susceptible to blaming: when choosing between trying to help their children conform as much as possible with socio-cultural norms of appearance and behaviour or trying to make them feel that not to do so does not make them a lesser person. Disability issues—hiding a missing thumb under mittens, teaching deaf children to speak or

---

Abigail Lee Six, *Changing Models of Motherhood? Hideous Progeny and Mother-Blame in Ana García-Siñeriz, Esas mujeres rubias* (2011)



performing surgery to normalize the looks of children with Down's syndrome, for example—can be seen to dovetail with other areas that fall outside the disabled category but face mothers with the same kinds of questions: what to do about their children's weight, birthmarks, crooked teeth, acne, and so on. It is striking that journalists—including the respectable end of the profession—continue to impute such decisions to mothers. For example, an article published on the BBC website relating to a news story from 1998 has a judgemental mother-blaming thrust, reflected in its opening sentence: 'The mother of a Down's syndrome baby who put her daughter through three painful operations to improve her appearance has denied acting out of vanity.' On the other hand, disability and looking different are both explicitly listed on the Childline website as making children vulnerable to bullying, however unfair and wrong this is. Hence, there is clearly a dilemma faced by mothers, who are bound to want their children to be accepted, popular, and happy and to maximize their chances of this.<sup>34</sup>

The internal characters respond negatively and aggressively to Carmela in the episode of the mittens and on first reading we are bound to take their side. However, when we think back to it with the deeper understanding of her character which emerges towards the end of the novel, we can perhaps be more charitable, realizing it is just one more manifestation of her general attitude of keeping up appearances, putting on a brave face, and burying whatever is painful to confront—the classic Franco-era policy of suppression and falsification of the truth with respect to the atrocities of the Civil War and its aftermath.<sup>35</sup> That least-said-soonest-mended mentality typical of her generation, which, as we have seen, she defends explicitly, reminds us that not showing one's feelings is not the same as not having any; Carmela too, then, is a victim of mother-blame.

That we are likely to have uncritically internalized the irrational feelings of guilt felt by the mothers, but not the fathers, without even realizing we have done so is borne out by the fact that the ending of *Esas mujeres rubias* seems surprising, bringing us face to face with our unconscious assumptions in this regard. We already knew that the genetic origin of Alma's condition, if hereditary, might derive from Fernando's paternal side. We now learn that even if the maternal line is responsible, as seems more likely, that is almost bound to be attributable to father-daughter child-abuse on the part of Anselma's father, incest committed with her elder sister, of which she was the product. Thus, there is a gender-reversal in the causal chain that emerges at the novel's dénouement. This is a story, it now transpires, in which the suffering narrated is traceable to a father's and not a mother's actions. The fact that this comes as a shock

---

Abigail Lee Six, *Changing Models of Motherhood? Hideous Progeny and Mother-Blame in Ana García-Siñeriz, Esas mujeres rubias* (2011)

throws into stark relief how much we still take for granted unconsciously that mothers ‘create’ their children and are wholly responsible for the result.

Unlike Anselma, María gives birth in a modern hospital, anaesthetized with an epidural. She goes to Brussels with Fernando and Alma to see an international expert in Diamond-Blackfan anemia and her care of her daughter involves managing the latest drug therapies and blood transfusions, thanks to all of which Alma lives fourteen years rather than dying in infancy. That is different from the fate of her grandmother’s children and demonstrates medical progress of a tangible kind. Nonetheless, it remains debatable how preferable all of it is for María. She hates feeling like an object on a conveyor-belt when she goes into labour and Alma’s survival, though beyond price for both her and her mother, is blighted by frequent hospital treatments and stays, which serve to reveal that part of the misery of being the mother of a disabled child is attributable not to the condition itself, but to attitudes in society that date back centuries but still inform public health policy. María’s narration of one these inpatient episodes with Alma illustrates this. The extremely poor provision for mothers is handled coolly in the text, as our narrator, rather than complaining or being polemical, simply describes the conditions and how she has learnt to cope with them:

In a place like that, you couldn’t expect privacy. By then I could sleep like a log on the foldaway bed which I had learnt the knack of pulling out from the armchair thanks to another regular mother. And I would use drawing-pins to cover the glass door with a towel so I could dress without being seen from the corridor.

In the mornings, I would grab a quick wash in the bathrooms without locks or bolts. No longer did I jump every time I heard a noise or someone giving the door a push and I was quite capable of having a pee with one hand against the door, some tissues ready in my mouth and my other hand steadying me against the wall. The one thing that hadn’t changed in all that time was the shower. There, I had to risk it. No door, no curtain, no hot water... if one wanted to maintain some kind of hygiene, there was no choice but to freeze and expose oneself to public exhibition.<sup>36</sup>

This shows how what is an emotionally draining, traumatic experience in any case is aggravated by material discomfort, with the added bitter irony that even to feel—let alone express—any discontent would seem to oneself, as well as to others, a sign of monstrous selfishness compared with the matter of a seriously ill child. Lest one might be tempted to argue that this applies to parenthood in general, it is worth briefly returning to an earlier episode, which highlights the contrast between fathers and mothers in this regard. The first time that María had begun to worry about Alma, she insisted that Fernando take them to accident and emergency on their way home from holiday. He had dropped them off and taken the luggage back to their flat while

---

**Abigail Lee Six, *Changing Models of Motherhood? Hideous Progeny and Mother-Blame in Ana García-Siñeriz, Esas mujeres rubias* (2011)**

mother and baby endured a long and stressful wait at the hospital. When he returned, having missed this and the eventual consultation, he was freshly showered and changed, but when María observed the fact with incredulity, we were told: ‘he [Fernando] gave me a wounded, misunderstood look and I, feeling guilty, said no more’.<sup>37</sup> Evidently, from his perspective—and hers, since she admits to feeling guilty about it—to begrudge him the extra time that it took to attend—admittedly hurriedly—to his own needs (he also made himself a quick sandwich, it transpires, but did not make one to take to the hospital for his wife (*EMR*, p. 323)) is perfectly unreasonable after a long drive in sweltering heat.<sup>38</sup> Taken together with what María tolerates both on this first occasion and regularly thereafter, the underlying point is that we take for granted that a mother—but evidently not a father—will and should put looking after a sick child ahead of her own bodily comfort, not to mention her marriage and career. It is that double standard which doubtless justifies the low public spending priority given to providing facilities for mothers staying with their children in hospital. This shows up, in other words, that part of the misery that disability causes is not going to be resolved by scientific advances because it is grounded in cultural attitudes that have little or nothing to do with medicine. Rather, they are symptoms of seemingly untouchable socio-cultural constants, such as those pertaining to motherhood perceived as self-sacrificial.<sup>39</sup>

Another area where there has been scientific progress proves equally unhelpful to María, namely, the development of contraception and fertility treatments. This means that María and Fernando need to make a conscious joint decision about whether to have another child, something María desperately wants, principally to provide a bone-marrow donor for Alma. However, Fernando disagrees and his preference prevails, leaving María effectively as powerless to control her own fertility as her grandmother had been and perhaps worse off as a result: Anselma and her husband could face successive pregnancies together, whereas for María the issue of having more children is divisive and destructive to her relationship with Fernando. The science may have moved on, in other words—María actually suggests IVF to Fernando if he no longer wants to have sex with her—but the old power balance within this marriage, at least, has not shifted one ounce. María’s experience here suggests that it is simplistic to believe that thanks to scientific progress, women nowadays have a real and free choice as to the number of children they have and this fictional depiction appears to echo contemporary reality in Spain, where a 1999 survey recorded that 43% of women aged between 30 and 39 wished they had had more

---

Abigail Lee Six, *Changing Models of Motherhood? Hideous Progeny and Mother-Blame in Ana García-Siñeriz, Esas mujeres rubias* (2011)

children, but the reasons why this was the case investigated in the article were more to do with men's choices (to stay single for longer or permanently, to travel, and so on) than women's.<sup>40</sup>

As we have seen, the greatest comforts that María finds after Alma's death are unrelated to what modern motherhood, science, and medicine are able to offer. She would undoubtedly sooner part with her sleeping-pills than her box of mementoes from Alma or a bracelet her grandmother bequeathed to her, engraved in memory of her lost babies. Perhaps of equal importance to her is the bond that she feels she has forged with Hodgson Burnett as she translates *The Secret Garden*. Indeed, it is the production of this text—offspring jointly parented, as it were, by two bereaved mothers—which gives María the confidence to write her own story, the novel that we are reading, and her non-hideous progeny produced, as it were, without reliance on or consent from anyone.<sup>41</sup> Anselma, whose marriage was not destroyed by the bereavements, who would have believed she would be reunited with all her babies in the afterlife, and who had a surviving human child in the end, could find meaning and value in her life post-bereavement without the need to resort to producing literary offspring by way of substitute. Be that as it may, however, it remains the case that all three mothers have undergone enormous suffering and that this has been deepened by the sense of guilt and blame that they all have borne in seemingly equal measure, but which their husbands appear to have largely or completely escaped.

In conclusion, by the end of *Esas mujeres rubias* it has become clear that a mother's bereavement and the fear of it are as painful as they always have been; and that mother-blame for making bad choices—however irrational it may be to associate them with her rather than both parents or neither—is still a particularly distressing part of that, as it always has been too. Even if we concede that mothers themselves are implicated in this by self-blaming, something that we saw acknowledged in Anselma's willingness to 'take the blame for everything' and María's thrice-repeated 'sorry' to her newborn baby that only adds to mother-blaming; now, we are blaming them for blaming themselves as well as for everything else. Our choices may revolve around different decisions and our confessors may be doctors, but that antique sense of sole responsibility for the children that we bear, with the guilt which that entails when they are less than perfect—always, in other words—seems to have made little if any progress since Mary Shelley called *Frankenstein* her 'hideous progeny' almost two centuries ago.

---

Abigail Lee Six, *Changing Models of Motherhood? Hideous Progeny and Mother-Blame in Ana García-Siñeriz, Esas mujeres rubias* (2011)

---

<sup>1</sup> Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'A Defence of Poetry' (composed 1821, first published 1840), in *The Major Works*, ed. Zachary Leader and Michael O'Neil (Oxford: OUP, 2003), 674-701, p. 697. I am grateful to Edward Lee-Six, for drawing this quotation to my attention.

<sup>2</sup> Ana García-Siñeriz, *Esas mujeres rubias* (Barcelona: Planeta, 2011), p. 61. Further references will be to this edition and use the abbreviation *EMR*.

<sup>3</sup> For more on the life of Frances Hodgson Burnett, see Ann Thwaite, *Waiting for the Party: The Life of Frances Hodgson Burnett, 1849-1924* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1974). For a discussion of the significance of the translation work, see Abigail Lee Six, 'Translation as Therapy: María's Version of *The Secret Garden* in Ana García-Siñeriz, *Esas mujeres rubias*', in *Helen Lane: In Translation*, ed. by Carol Maier (Mexico City: Lumen, forthcoming).

<sup>4</sup> Marc A. Rubinstein, for example, asserts, 'The monster, as abandoned baby, is the voice of a mother's conscience' ('My Accursed Origin': The Search for the Mother in "Frankenstein", *Studies in Romanticism*, 15:2 (1976), 165-94 (187)). For an interesting discussion of motherhood in *Frankenstein*, see Maggie Kilgour, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 194-206. Kilgour observes: 'Victor's usurpation of divine powers of creation is also a male appropriation of the female ability to give birth. He thus breaks from a female past to recreate it in grotesque forms' (p.206).

<sup>5</sup> This is discussed illuminatingly in Susan Stanford Friedman, 'Creativity and the Childbirth Metaphor: Gender Difference in Literary Discourse', *Feminist Studies*, 13 (1987), 49-82. She concludes with ample and convincing evidence: 'The basic analogy of creation and procreation remains the same for both women and men. However, female and male metaphors mean differently and mean something different, indeed something opposite. Male metaphors intensify difference and collision, while female metaphors enhance sameness and collusion. In spite of individual variation, male metaphors often covertly affirm the traditional separation of creativity and procreativity. Female metaphors, in contrast, tend to defy those divisions and reconstitute woman's fragmented self into a (pro)creative whole uniting word and flesh, body and mind' (75).

<sup>6</sup> Ten years before producing this novel, the author published a manual for expectant mothers, which she dedicated to her mother, her grandmother, and her daughter, suggesting an appreciation of the matrilineal chain which she has in common with her fictional creation. See Ana García-Siñeriz, *Bebé a bordo: disfrutar del embarazo y la maternidad* (Barcelona: Martínez Roca, 2010), p. 7.

<sup>7</sup> It is worth underlining that as this is fiction, any information that it provides is of a specific kind: it comes from one author's imagination, admittedly, but she is a product of the culture in which she lives and consciously or unconsciously creates characters according to standards of plausibility that conform to that.

<sup>8</sup> 'Introduction', in *Writing Mothers and Daughters: Renegotiating the Mother in Western European Narratives by Women*, ed. by Adalgisa Giorgio (Oxford and New York: Berghaan, 2002), pp. 1-9 (p. 3). See also Teresa González Pérez, 'El aprendizaje de la maternidad: discursos para la educación de las mujeres en España (siglo XX)', *Convergencia: Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, 15 (2008), 91-117 (93) who acknowledges that the conceptualization of motherhood is largely a transnational phenomenon and as the present article will also do, cites Badinter and other non-Spanish scholars in support of her arguments.

<sup>9</sup> The high fertility and infant mortality in this fictional case is in keeping with demographic fact. For a detailed study of the latter, see David Sven Reher and Pedro Luis Iriso-Napal, 'Marital Fertility and its Determinants in Rural and

---

**Abigail Lee Six, Changing Models of Motherhood? Hideous Progeny and Mother-Blame in Ana García-Siñeriz, *Esas mujeres rubias* (2011)**

**Studies in the Maternal**, 5(2), 2013, [www.mamsie.bbk.ac.uk](http://www.mamsie.bbk.ac.uk)

Urban Spain 1887-1930', *Population Studies*, 43 (1989), 405-27. The authors acknowledge, however, that 'very little is known about the determinants of infant and child mortality at this time in Spain' (415).

<sup>10</sup> Jessica L. Collett, 'What Kind of Mother Am I? Impression Management and the Social Construction of Motherhood', *Symbolic Interaction*, 28:3 (2005), 327-47 (328) (my italics). See also Rachel T. Hare-Mustin, 'Family Change and Gender Differences: Implications for Theory and Practice', *National Council on Family Relations*, 37:1 (1988), 36-41, who highlights the way in which family therapists reinforce mother-blaming (40). For the Spanish cultural context in particular, but bearing out the transnational applicability of mother-blaming, see Catherine Bourland Ross, 'Why We Are All in the Club: *El club de las malas madres*', in *The Changing Spanish Family: Essays on New Views in Literature, Cinema and Theater*, ed. by Tiffany Trotman (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011), pp. 9-23.

<sup>11</sup> Chodorow, Nancy J. and Susan Contratto, 'The Fantasy of the Perfect Mother', in Nancy J. Chodorow, *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), pp. 79-96 (p. 89).

<sup>12</sup> It is notable in the Spanish religious context that the preacher Juan Luis Vives (1492-1540) blames mothers' indulgence rather than fathers' lack of discipline and authority for their children's moral flaws. For a discussion of this, see Badinter, *The Myth of Motherhood: An Historical View of the Maternal Instinct* [1980], trans. by Roger DeGaris (London: Souvenir, 1981), pp. 33-34. Badinter dates the attribution to mothers of sole responsibility for how their children turn out (in France, at least) to the mid-eighteenth century (p. 167) and asserts that by the end of the nineteenth 'guilt had invaded women's hearts' (p. 201). Linked to this deep-rooted and yet illogical exoneration of fathers is also, no doubt, the traditional blaming of women only for children born out of wedlock. On this, see Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (London: Virago, 1977), p. 259.

<sup>13</sup> Chodorow and Contratto, p. 96.

<sup>14</sup> An exhaustive list would be too long to include here, but a few examples from contemporary Spanish fiction by women might be Esther Tusquets (1936-2012), in whose whole oeuvre the mother figure's importance cannot be overstated, but this is invariably presented as other relative to the focalizer. The mother is also very important but likewise positioned as other relative to the narrative perspective by Almudena Grandes in novels such as *Malena es un nombre de tango* (1994). This novel also narrates the stories of several generations of women in the same family – most of them mothers at some point in the plot—across roughly the same timespan as *Esas mujeres rubias* but the perspective is daughter- and sister-focused. The mother in Adelaida García Morales's most celebrated work, *El Sur* (1981), is once again portrayed as other relative to the daughter-protagonist. Adalgisa Giorgio observes that this is not a peculiarity of Spanish women's writing, asserting that 'the daughter's point of view still dominates literary representations of mother daughter relations' ('Writing the Mother-Daughter Relationship', in *Writing Mothers and Daughters*, p. 23). For a wide-ranging survey of Spanish women's narratives dealing with mothers and daughters, see Christine Arkinstall's article in the same volume, 'Towards a Female Symbolic: Re-Presenting Mothers and Daughters in Contemporary Spanish Narrative by Women', pp. 47-84.

<sup>15</sup> Rich, both p. 276.

<sup>16</sup> 'excesivamente culpabilizadores para la madre, sobre la que cargaban, cómo no, toda la responsabilidad – por no decir culpa – de los problemas o fracasos de los hijos.' Lucía Etxebarria and Goyo Bustos, *El club de las malas madres* (Madrid: Martínez Roca, 2009), p. 22. This and all translations are my own unless otherwise specified.

---

**Abigail Lee Six, Changing Models of Motherhood? Hideous Progeny and Mother-Blame in Ana García-Siñeriz, *Esas mujeres rubias* (2011)**

**Studies in the Maternal**, 5(2), 2013, [www.mamsie.bbk.ac.uk](http://www.mamsie.bbk.ac.uk)

<sup>17</sup> ‘Reconstructing Motherhood in the Age of “Perfect” Babies: Mothers of Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities’, *Signs*, 24:1 (1998), 69-99 (77).

<sup>18</sup> Landsman, 82. The idea of blaming women for making unhealthy choices that have negative consequences for their offspring is nothing new. Badinter, for example, cites a Dr Raulin castigating French mothers in 1769 for consuming inappropriate food and drink while pregnant and breastfeeding (p. 157) and she produces a wealth of evidence attesting to the pressures on them from 1760 onwards (in France, at least) to breastfeed rather than hire wet-nurses. She also observes that the same exclusive targeting of mothers applies to behavioural practices, noting that the grounds for mother-blame altered, but that the blame itself remained when attitudes shifted at the end of the eighteenth century in favour of believing in kindness towards children (in France, at least), (p.72).

<sup>19</sup> Landsman, 94-95.

<sup>20</sup> Adalgisa Giorgio also contests the idea that advances in contraception and fertility services for women can be unproblematically taken as leading to giving them a free choice as to whether to have one or more children (‘Writing the Mother-Daughter Relationship: Psychoanalysis, Culture, and Literary Criticism’, in *Writing Mothers and Daughters*, ed. by Giorgio, pp. 11-45 (p. 23).

<sup>21</sup> “‘El Señor se los llevaba, sin dar explicaciones’” (*EMR*, p. 207).

<sup>22</sup> It is entirely in keeping with the realist depiction of Anselma that the avant-garde and feminist ideas circulating among the mainly urban intelligentsia in the pre-Civil War period (with figures like Carmen de Burgos publishing articles advocating for divorce and other social advances inimical to Roman Catholic tradition), would not have reached her, due to her remote location and most of all, her illiteracy. For a useful survey of the history of feminism in Spain, see Roberta Johnson, ‘Spanish Feminism Then and Now’, *Anales de la literatura española contemporánea*, 28 (2003), 11-20. For historical background concerning the legal status of women before, during, and after the Franco years, see Arkinstall, pp. 47-51.

<sup>23</sup> The idea of divine retribution falling upon the children of sinners and on to the third and fourth generation is found recurrently in the Old Testament. See Exodus 20:5, 34:7, Deuteronomy 5:9; and Numbers 14:18.

<sup>24</sup> ‘cargó con las culpas de todo’ (*EMR*, p. 212).

<sup>25</sup> ‘la culpaban en voz baja de tanta desgracia’ (*EMR*, p. 213).

<sup>26</sup> Badinter, p. 236. Here, she is referring to attitudes current in nineteenth-century France, but they would be applicable to Anselma’s cultural context in early twentieth-century rural Spain, since they are no more than a logical corollary of a conservative interpretation of Church doctrine.

<sup>27</sup> Badinter, p. 288; my italics. Whilst Badinter’s work dates from 1980, there is ample evidence that her observations remain valid. See, for example, the introductory remarks in a 2003 article about the impact of a mother’s death upon her children, which opens with the words, ‘It is widely held that mothers are essential for the health and well-being of their children’ (David Sven Reher and Fernando González-Quñones, ‘Do Parents Really Matter? Child Health and Development in Spain during the Demographic Transition’, *Population Studies*, 57 (2003), 63-75 (63)). The obvious implication of this is that when a child’s health or well-being is poor, the mother is the one who will be blamed.

<sup>28</sup> ‘La mecí con una sola palabra a modo de nana: “Perdón... perdón... perdón...”’ (*EMR*, p. 267). Spanish has several ways of saying sorry, distinguishing between expressions of regret without any presupposition of blame or need for

---

**Abigail Lee Six, Changing Models of Motherhood? Hideous Progeny and Mother-Blame in Ana García-Siñeriz, *Esas mujeres rubias* (2011)**

**Studies in the Maternal**, 5(2), 2013, [www.mamsie.bbk.ac.uk](http://www.mamsie.bbk.ac.uk)

apology on the one hand, and conveying acceptance that one has done something wrong, on the other. ‘Perdón’, the one used here, is the latter.

<sup>29</sup> ‘Antes de que naciera Jaime no conseguía dormir. Tanto miedo tenía a que me pasara lo mismo que a mi madre. Cuando nació tan blanco, pasé los tres primeros años observándole fijamente, pendiente de él. Y luego tú, tan distinta, morenita y tan diferente a nosotros, fue un alivio; pensé que ya estaba terminado... En mi casa nunca se había mencionado aquello; ahora se habla de todo, con los hijos, con cualquier desconocido, pero, entonces, ni mi padre ni mi madre se referían a lo de los niños más que para pedir por sus almitas o, dos veces al año, acercarse al cementerio, el día de Difuntos y el de los Santos Inocentes’ (EMR, p. 457).

<sup>30</sup> ‘Mamá siempre se había mostrado a la defensiva cuando algún extraño indagaba en el anecdotario familiar’ (EMR, p. 373).

<sup>31</sup> ‘no se atrevió a negarse, por un extraño sentimiento de culpa’ (EMR, p. 489). The misinterpretation which is likely to be placed upon these comments on first reading is that Carmela’s defensiveness is to do with her social climbing aspirations, whereby she wants to avoid revealing her humble family background. It is only later on or on a re-reading that they can be seen to reflect her anxieties and guilt.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Para ella, una mujer, si no es guapa porque la naturaleza no le ha hecho ese regalo, al menos debe esforzarse en mantener una apariencia. Defiende el artificio, la trampa, el afeitte. Todo lo contrario que yo’ (EMR, p. 113).

<sup>33</sup> Concerning the idealization of blond hair, it is noteworthy that in a sociology article on the subject of eating disorders, blondness is mentioned in passing and without comment as part of the image of perfection presented by the media. See Carmen Bañuelos, ‘Los patrones estéticos en los albores del siglo XXI: hacia una revisión de los estudios en torno a este tema’, *Reis: Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas*, 68 (Oct.-Dec. 1994), 119-40 (123-24). For more on the idealization of blondness in Spain, see Abigail Lee Six, ‘Spinning Straw into Gold: Blond Hair and the Autobiographical Illusion in the Fiction of Esther Tusquets’, in *Looking Towards and After Esther Tusquets*, ed. by Nina Molinaro and Inmaculada Pertusa (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, forthcoming).

<sup>34</sup> For a strong medical argument against surgery for children with Down’s syndrome, see R.B. Jones, ‘Parental Consent to Cosmetic Facial Surgery in Down’s Syndrome’, *Journal of Medical Ethics*, 26 (2000), 101-02. For the news story, The BBC Online Network, ‘Down’s Syndrome Mother Denies Vanity’, The BBC Online, 18 November 1998, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/216479.stm> [accessed 16 April 2013]. For one mother’s account of the decision-making around teaching her two deaf children to speak, see Rosner, Jennifer, ‘Teaching a Deaf Child Her Mother’s Tongue’, The New York Times, 8 May 2012, available at <http://parenting.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/05/08/teaching-a-deaf-child-her-mothers-tongue/> [accessed 16 April 2013].

<sup>35</sup> For a detailed discussion of how the Franco regime functioned in this regard and the developments since it ended in 1975, see for example Madeleine Davis, ‘Is Spain Recovering Its Memory? Breaking the *Pacto del Olvido*’, *Human Rights Quarterly*, 27 (2005), 858-80.

<sup>36</sup> ‘En un lugar así no podías contar con intimidad. Para entonces yo ya dormía de un tirón en la cama mueble que había que sacar de la butaca con un truco aprendido de otra madre habitual. Y tapaba el cristal de la puerta con una toalla asegurada con chinchetas para poder vestirme sin que me vieran desde el pasillo. [...] Por las mañanas, me lavoteaba en los baños, sin llave ni cerrojo. Ya no pegaba un salto cada vez que notaba un ruido o un empujón en la

---

**Abigail Lee Six, Changing Models of Motherhood? Hideous Progeny and Mother-Blame in Ana García-Siñeriz, *Esas mujeres rubias* (2011)**



puerta y era bien capaz de hacer pis con una mano bloqueando la puerta, los *kleenex* preparados en la boca y la otra mano anclándome en la pared. Lo único que no había cambiado en todo ese tiempo era la ducha. Ahí, tenía que arriesgarme. Sin puerta, sin cortina, sin agua caliente... si se quería mantener un nivel de limpieza había que congelarse y exponerse a la exhibición' (EMR, pp. 414-15).

<sup>37</sup> 'me miró [Fernando] con cara de incomprendido y yo, culpable, me callé' (EMR, p.322).

<sup>38</sup> It is of course possible to read this episode differently: to argue that Fernando trusted his wife to handle the situation well and therefore showered and ate before returning to the hospital so as to be able to take over and send her home to do likewise. As María is the narrator, we only have access to how she interpreted his actions and her guilty feelings arising from that interpretation: more self-blame, in other words, justified or unjustified, which Fernando is spared as far as we can tell.

<sup>39</sup> Christiane Olivier attests to the pervasiveness of this in real life: 'L'éducation de l'enfant occupe de façon majeure la vie de la femme, qui se sentant unique responsable de son enfant, est prête à tout lui sacrifier' (*Les Enfants de Jocaste: L'empreinte de la mère* (Paris: Denoël/Gonthier, 1980), p. 175); she sees enduring imputations of guilt inflicted exclusively on mothers as deeply damaging to women's lives: 'C'est à la *maternité*, et non à la *sexualité*, que se rattache la principale injustice entre les sexes' (p. 180; her italics). More recently and with respect to the Spanish cultural context in particular, Teresa González Pérez gives self-sacrifice as one of the four qualities that traditionally – but to this day - define a good mother (her other three are love, goodness, and yieldingness ('entrega')), which she goes on to link with the cult of the Virgin Mary. See 'El aprendizaje de la maternidad', 92 and 97, respectively).

<sup>40</sup> Juan Antonio Martínez Pastor, 'Cada vez menos y más tarde : un análisis de la nupcialidad masculina durante los últimos treinta años en España', *Reis : Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas*, 123 (Jul.-Sep. 2008), 59-86 (61).

<sup>41</sup> If we choose to read this metaphor into *Esas mujeres rubias*, the fact that María resents the anaesthetized delivery of Alma which Fernando has persuaded her to have chimes with the fact that she welcomes the difficulty of the translation of *The Secret Garden* (EMR, p. 217).

## References

- Arkinstall, Christine, 'Towards a Female Symbolic: Re-Presenting Mothers and Daughters in Contemporary Spanish Narrative', in *Writing Mothers and Daughters: Renegotiating the Mother in Western European Narratives by Women*, ed. by Adalgisa Giorgio (Oxford and New York: Berghaan, 2002), pp. 47-84.
- Badinter, Elisabeth, *The Myth of Motherhood: An Historical View of the Maternal Instinct* [1980], trans. by Roger DeGaris (London: Souvenir, 1981).
- Bañuelos, Carmen, 'Los patrones estéticos en los albores del siglo XXI: hacia una revisión de los estudios en torno a este tema', *Reis: Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas*, 68 (Oct.-Dec. 1994), 119-40.
- Bourland Ross, Catherine, 'Why We Are All in the Club: *El club de las malas madres*', in *The Changing Spanish Family: Essays on New Views in Literature, Cinema and Theater*, ed. by Tiffany Trotman (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011), pp. 9-23.

---

**Abigail Lee Six, Changing Models of Motherhood? Hideous Progeny and Mother-Blame in Ana García-Siñeriz, *Esas mujeres rubias* (2011)**

**Studies in the Maternal**, 5(2), 2013, [www.mamsie.bbk.ac.uk](http://www.mamsie.bbk.ac.uk)

- Chodorow, Nancy J. and Susan Contratto, 'The Fantasy of the Perfect Mother', in Nancy J. Chodorow, *Feminism and Psychoanalytic Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), pp. 79-96.
- Collett, Jessica L., 'What Kind of Mother Am I? Impression Management and the Social Construction of Motherhood', *Symbolic Interaction*, 28:3 (2005), 327-47.
- Davis, Madeleine, 'Is Spain Recovering Its Memory? Breaking the *Pacto del Olvido*', *Human Rights Quarterly*, 27 (2005), 858-80.
- Etxebarria, Lucía and Goyo Bustos, *El club de las malas madres* (Madrid: Martínez Roca, 2009).
- García-Siñeriz, Ana, *Bebé a bordo: disfrutar del embarazo y la maternidad* (Barcelona: Martínez Roca, 2010)
- García-Siñeriz, Ana, *Esas mujeres rubias* (Barcelona: Planeta, 2011).
- Giorgio, Adalgisa, ed., *Writing Mothers and Daughters: Renegotiating the Mother in Western European Narratives by Women* (Oxford and New York: Berghaan, 2002).
- González Pérez, Teresa, 'El aprendizaje de la maternidad: discursos para la educación de las mujeres en España (siglo XX)', *Convergencia : Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, 15 (2008), 91-117.
- Hare-Mustin, Rachel T., 'Family Change and Gender Differences: Implications for Theory and Practice', *National Council on Family Relations*, 37:1 (1988), 36-41.
- Johnson, Roberta, 'Spanish Feminism Then and Now', *Anales de la literatura española contemporánea*, 28 (2003), 11-20.
- Kilgour, Maggie, *The Rise of the Gothic Novel* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).
- Landsman, Gail H., 'Reconstructing Motherhood in the Age of "Perfect" Babies: Mothers of Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities', *Signs*, 24:1 (1998), 69-99.
- Lee Six, Abigail, 'Spinning Straw into Gold: Blond Hair and the Autobiographical Illusion in the Fiction of Esther Tusquets', in ... ed. by Nina Molinaro (forthcoming)
- Lee Six, Abigail, 'Translation as Therapy: María's Version of *The Secret Garden* in Ana García-Siñeriz, *Esas mujeres rubias*' in *Helen Lane: In Translation*, ed. by Carol Maier (Mexico City: Lumen, forthcoming).
- Martínez Pastor, Juan Antonio, 'Cada vez menos y más tarde : un análisis de la nupcialidad masculina durante los últimos treinta años en España', *Reis : Revista Española de Investigaciones Sociológicas*, 123 (Jul.-Sep. 2008), 59-86.
- Olivier, Christiane, *Les Enfants de Jocaste: L'empreinte de la mère* (Paris: Denoël/Gonthier, 1980).
- Reher, David Sven and Fernando González-Quñones, 'Do Parents Really Matter? Child Health and Development in Spain during the Demographic Transition', *Population Studies*, 57 (2003), 63-75
- Reher, David Sven and Pedro Luis Iriso-Napal, 'Marital Fertility and its Determinants in Rural and Urban Spain 1887-1930', *Population Studies*, 43 (1989), 405-27.
- Rich, Adrienne, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (London: Virago, 1977).
- Rosner, Jennifer, 'Teaching a Deaf Child Her Mother's Tongue', *The New York Times*, 8 May 2012, available at <http://parenting.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/05/08/teaching-a-deaf-child-her-mothers-tongue/> [accessed 16 April 2013].
- Rubinstein, Marc A., "'My Accursed Origin": The Search for the Mother in "Frankenstein"', *Studies in Romanticism*, 15:2 (1976), 165-94.

---

**Abigail Lee Six, Changing Models of Motherhood? Hideous Progeny and Mother-Blame in Ana García-Siñeriz, *Esas mujeres rubias* (2011)**

**Studies in the Maternal**, 5(2), 2013, [www.mamsie.bbk.ac.uk](http://www.mamsie.bbk.ac.uk)

Stanford Friedman, Susan, 'Creativity and the Childbirth Metaphor: Gender Difference in Literary Discourse', *Feminist Studies*, 13 (1987), 49-82.

The BBC Online Network, 'Down's Syndrome Mother Denies Vanity', The BBC Online, 18 November 1998, available at <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/216479.stm> [accessed 16 April 2013].

Thwaite, Ann, *Waiting for the Party: The Life of Frances Hodgson Burnett, 1849-1924* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1974).

---

Abigail Lee Six, Changing Models of Motherhood? Hideous Progeny and Mother-Blame in Ana García-Siñeriz, *Esas mujeres rubias* (2011)

*Studies in the Maternal*, 5(2), 2013, [www.mamsie.bbk.ac.uk](http://www.mamsie.bbk.ac.uk)