
TRACES OF THE DESTITUTE AMONG THE PAPERS OF THE HOSPITAL OF BARCELONA**Teresa Vinyoles Vidal**Institut de Recerca en Cultures Medievales – IRCVM
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Received: 10 Sept. 2013 | Revised: 14 Oct. 2013 | Accepted: 1 Dec. 2013 | Available online: 20 Dec. 2013 | doi: 10.1344/Svmma2013.2.15

Resum

Aquest text, que té el seu origen en la ponència que vam presentar al simposi internacional *Fonts gràfiques i documentals per a l'estudi històric dels hospitals* (abril 2013), pretén oferir un petit mostrari de la informació que es pot extreure i les conclusions que se'n deriven, de la consulta directa de les fonts documentals de l'antic hospital de la Santa Creu de Barcelona. El punt de partida de la nostra recerca s'emmarca en els mateixos orígens històrics d'aquesta centenària institució, és a dir, l'albada del segle xv. En aquest sentit, bàsicament hem fet servir els llibres d'entrades de malalts i d'expòsits, un minutari comptable i uns manuals notariais del quatre-cents i d'èpoques posteriors, conservats a la Biblioteca de Catalunya i a l'Arxiu Històric de la Fundació de l'Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau. El nostre propòsit no és fer-ne un estat de la qüestió, ni esbossar una història de la pobresa barcelonina, ni tampoc plantejar una visió comparativa de les institucions hospitalàries, senzillament, després de reflexionar sobre el tema, mirarem de dialogar amb les fonts i que siguin elles les que parlin. Procurarem, en el possible, sentir la veu dels pobres del passat, però sense oblidar que la pobresa no és propietat exclusiva dels temps medievals.

Paraules clau: Assistència, pobresa, marginalitat, infància, hospitals, Barcelona, documentació, arxiu, demografia

Abstract

This essay is based on the paper presented at the International Symposium *Documentary and visual sources for the historical study of hospitals* (April 2013), and it aims to offer a small sample of the information that can be extracted from the direct consultation of the documentary sources of the old Hospital de la Santa Creu in Barcelona, and the conclusions that can be derived from it. Our research begins with the birth of this centuries-old institution, that is, at the dawn of the fifteenth century. In this sense, we have basically used the books of admission of patients and foundlings, a minute book and several notarial manuals from fifteenth-century and later, preserved in the Library of Catalonia and the Historical Archive of the Foundation of the Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau. Our purpose is not to overview the history of poverty in Barcelona or to establish a comparison between its hospitals, but rather to reflect upon the sources, enter into a dialogue with them and let them speak for themselves. When possible, we will try to listen to the voices of the poor of the past, without forgetting that poverty is not exclusive to the medieval period.

Key words: Welfare, Poverty, Marginalization, Childhood, Hospitals, Barcelona, Documents, Archives, Demography

Digues, foll, ¿has vist home qui sia orat?-. Respòs que ell havia vist un bisbe qui havia a sa taula molts anaps, e moltes escudelles e talladors d'argent, e havia en sa cambra moltes vestedures e gran llit, e en ses caixes molts diners. E a la porta de son palau havia pocs pobres. [RAMON LLULL, *Amic i amat*, 292] ¹

1. *Introduction to Poverty and Charity*

Finding homeless people sleeping in doorways and poor people begging for alms is unfortunately common in our daily life, that is, we bear witness to an undeniable poverty. But there is a hidden poverty we often ignore, that we only notice when mass media report about the work of aid and relief organizations: the food banks, soup kitchens, shelter homes, Caritas... However, this bleak picture is not new. When turning to the past, we find similar institutions providing aid to the poor and needy. Their accurate study allows us to obtain first-hand knowledge of the living conditions of the destitute, their problems and what responses or initiatives were taken in each period to help them overcome the frequent situations of extreme need/deprivation. Ultimately, their study sheds light on the problems faced by the destitute and the responses of the society to the inherent/characteristic limitations of the time.

This essay is based on the paper presented at the International Symposium *Fonts gràfiques i documentals per a l'estudi històric dels hospitals* (April 2013), and it explores the research possibilities offered by the documentary sources of the Hospital de la Santa Creu in Barcelona. The starting point of our analysis is the very birth of this centuries-old institution, that is, at the dawn of the fifteenth century. This research has been carried out using the books of admission of patients and foundlings, a minute book, and several notarial manuals from the fifteenth and subsequent centuries, preserved in the Library of Catalonia and the Historical Archive of the Foundation of the Hospital de la Santa Creu and Sant Pau. It is not our purpose here to report on the state-of-the-art of research on this topic, nor to outline a history of poverty in Barcelona or to establish a comparison between its hospitals, but rather to reflect upon the sources, enter into a dialogue with them and let them speak for themselves. When possible, we will try to listen to the voices of the poor of the past, bearing in mind that poverty is not exclusive to the medieval period.

In the Middle Ages two kinds of poor are mentioned: the beggars or the poor of Christ, that is, those who were ostensibly very poor, and those named as 'vergonyats' (ashamed), who suffered from a hidden poverty. We can therefore state that there was a certain hierarchy in the marginal world (BRODMAN 1998, p. 4). Yet neither then nor now is there a genuine intention to eradicate poverty.

¹ 'Tell me fool, have you seen a madman? He answered he had seen a bishop who had many cups and plates and silver knives on his table, and many vestments and a large bed in his room, and plenty of money in his cupboard. And few poor before the doors of his palace'.

Francesc Eiximenis alluded to this situation in his writings and recommended the princes not to abandon the destitute in moments of crisis, especially the ashamed, who had been forced into poverty due to various circumstances (EIXIMENIS 1927 p. 98). He also insisted in the coexistence with those in need, without expelling them from their immediate surroundings, enjoining the princes to be compassionate and not to oppress the deprived (EIXIMENIS 1987, p. 459-461).

Si dius ¿Què farem dels pobres contrets e inútils e malalts tostemps? te dic que los pobres que són vers pobres deuen romandre aquí sens neguna molèstia. E açò per tal com per Déus són lleixats e posats en cascuna comunitat per tal que los rics, qui han a dar, hagen lloc de fer almoina e de rembre llurs pecats... Les riqueses són dades a l'hom... per satisfacer-ne a Déu, donant-les als pobres... (EIXIMENIS 1927, p. 125-127).²

Moreover, the learned man from Girona believed that those aware of the miseries of others were able to better preserve what was theirs, avoiding misery by working. To some extent, he assured that poverty was inevitable, even useful, since the poor could become a means for the salvation of the soul of the rich, especially merchant's.³ This may seem cynical, yet ultimately illustrates a well-known fact: the existence of the wealthy requires that of the poor. But then and now, we find also documents that testify to the existence of truly caring people who support the destitute. As for private charity, some lay people, in their daily lives, were committed to do the works of mercy. The activity developed by the Beguines and Tertiary orders is very interesting: they took care of lepers, they taught poor girls to read and write, advised women of the bourgeoisie, and buried those who were sentenced to death (BOTINAS, CABALEIRO, DURAN 2002). Furthermore we observe the example of Catherine, the wife of a grinder named Domènec Follit, who states in her will, from Barcelona, in 1396, that a youngster/child she had fostered from infancy (this means he would either be an orphan or a foundling) is to receive all the clothes she provided for him, plus a couple of shirts and a pair of braies. She also stipulated that he inherited a bed with all its garments: a mattress, a pair of sheets and a pillow, and a good blanket, on the condition that he used it to provide a place to sleep and rest for some poor of Jesus Christ, for the love of God.⁴

These are the circumstances considered when referring to the creation of institutions endeavoured to mitigate as much as possible the needs of the poor. Therefore, the creation of assistance institutions in the medieval world, hospitals and almshouses among them, was due to solidarity, Christian charity or either to avoid possible riots.

² 'If you ask what we should do concerning the crippled and the disabled and the sick, I would say that the genuinely poor should be allowed to stay here undisturbed. Because it is God who places them within every community, so that the rich, who enjoy prosperity, can remember their sins and dispense the alms... Wealth is given to men... to satisfy God, by giving it to the poor...' (EIXIMENIS, 1927, p. 125-127).

³ Francesc Eiximenis praises the merchant's charity: 'solament mercaders són gran almoniers e pares e frares de la cosa publica' (only merchants are great providers of alms and fathers and priests of the public) (EIXIMENIS 1927, p.147).

⁴ Arxiu Històric de Protocols de Barcelona [AHPB], Arnau Piquer, 51/33, f. 68v.

The preserved documentation from Barcelona evidence data concerning the original Hospital de la Santa Creu, mentioned in the will of Sunifred Llobet in year 995 as '*ospitalaris domum qui est ante ianuam Sancte Crucis*'.⁵ The building was reconstructed in 1090 and remained until the Colom building was concluded, in the Raval quarter, where the activity was transferred in 1219. Thus, the Hospital de la Santa Creu and its continuation, the Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau, had their remote origins before the year 1000.

It has often been stated that medieval hospitals were predominantly urban institutions (ESCOBAR 2011, p. 109). This is partly true because many cities witnessed the building of large establishments devoted to welfare, yet we should not neglect the assistance institutions in rural areas, and not only on the pilgrimage routes. However, the rural poverty is further unknown to us, either due to a lack of information or simply because the neighbourhood solidarity worked better than in the city. The documentation already reveals this reality in the eleventh century, as stated in the will of Arsenda of Àger in 1068, where she designated the foundation of five rural hospitals:

[...] que facin hospitals per repòs i cura dels pelegrins i per a qui fos necessari per l'amor de Déu omnipotent [...]. I hi posin draps per a reposar i hi donin tot dels nostres béns mobles, on sempre trobin els pobres consolació de menjar i beure. (SANAHUJA 1961, doc. 25)⁶

Easing food shortages, covering the basic needs of the disadvantaged, facilitate the redemption of captives, offer shelter to the pilgrims, and provide girls with few resources were these foundations ventures together with private people's charitable work. However, the main problem was poverty: feed the hungry, give shelter to the homeless and care for the sick poor, regardless of the period.

The urban society certainly favoured the existence of a new poverty, an anonymous mass of rural migrants who since the twelfth century, and especially in the subsequent centuries, moved to the city suburbs generating insecurity and even riots during times of scarcity. It was mainly under this circumstance that the charity institutions appeared, linked both to the new secular spirituality and the ecclesiastical foundations.

⁵ Arxiu de la Catedral de Barcelona [ACB], *Liber Antiquitatum* [LA] II, doc. 382; FÀBREGA 1995, doc. 267. A document from bishop Deodat mentions this hospital in year 1023, described as '*domui qui constructa est ad ospitalitarem pauperum in predicta civitate*' (ACB, LA, I, doc.757; BAUCCELLS 2006, doc. 368). In 1038, a priest named Amalric donated his houses for the construction of a hospital for poor and pilgrims; a priest and a woman named Oria took care of it (BAUCCELLS 2006, doc.563). Other hospitals in the city are also mentioned, such as the one of a man named Guitard, from whom we have not preserved accurate data. Therefore, it could be stated that at the beginning of the eleventh century the city of Barcelona would have had, at least, three hospitals. For further references see among other studies BATLLE 1987; BRODMAN 1998; CAPDEVILA 2009; CONEJO, 2013.

⁶ '[...] Hospitals for the rest and care of pilgrims and for those in need have to be built by the love of the Almighty God [...]. And clothing for rest have to be supplied, provided all from our personal movable properties, where the poor can always find consolation of food and drink.'

Some of these brand new institutions were concerned in providing food to the hungry. This is the case of the well-known almshouses administered by the Church, but also other private establishments such as the hospital founded by the citizen of Barcelona Pere Desvilar (1308). The aforementioned institution would provide sustentation to a fixed number of Jesus Christ's poor, who were daily provided with eighteen ounces of baked wheat bread, a sixth part of a quarter of wine of Barcelona (strong, not watered-down), the fifth part of a butcher's pound of sheep meat or the fourth part of a quarter of beef or bull; and on abstinence days a *diner* of fish, cheese or eggs, plus a portion of a prepared meal, well and decently cooked, both on meat and fish days.⁷ The hunger suffered by the most deprived in his own environment motivated Desvilar to create a hospital to relieve the hunger of the poor.

However, as we move forward into the Middle Ages we can discern a major commitment of the municipal and ecclesiastical institutions in launching social policies designed to deal with the problem of poverty, not to eradicate it, yet rather to control it. It is in this context when the construction of the major urban hospitals was performed, attaining in some cases remarkable architectural and symbolic features, to the extent of being perceived as a sign of civic pride. Without going any further, the ordinances of the hospital of the la Santa Creu of 1417 described the building as 'lum, noblesa, ornament, laor, glòria e amplitud de la ciutat' (ROCA 1920, p. V).⁸

2. *Observing Needs through the Functions of the Hospital of the Santa Creu*

Hospitals, therefore, were the response to the needs that had to be covered by society: attend the sick poor, give refuge to foundlings and isolate lepers and the insane from and the rest of the population. The aforementioned ordinances of the Hospital de la Santa Creu (1417) establishes this by an eloquent writing:

hi són continuament acollits, rebuts, sostinguts e alimentats, en gran nombre, homes e dones pobres, afollats, contrets, orats, nafrats, e havents altres diverses misèries humanes, infants gitats e altres persones miserables de diverses nacions e condicions (ROCA 1920, p.V).⁹

This means that new Hospital in Barcelona had been founded to guarantee the care of the sick poor, both physical and mental, and to take in the abandoned children. It also specifies that there was no geographical restrictions, equally welcoming local patients as those from other parts of the Kingdom.

⁷ Arxiu de l'Hospital de la Santa Creu i Sant Pau [AHSCSP], Hospital 'Porcions' of Pere Desvilar, 3, f. 1v-4r. Concerning this hospital, we should underline the recent investigations of Teresa Huguet (2013, p. 173 i ss.). In reference to the book of 'porcioners' see another text by the same author (Huguet 2013b).

⁸ 'light, nobility, ornament, praise, glory and wealth of the city', see also CONEJO (in press).

⁹ 'There are always admitted, welcome, maintained and fed, in great number, poor men and women, crippled, disabled, insane, wounded, and suffering any other several human miseries, newborn and other miserable people from different nations and conditions'

Leprosy was a damned disease, a ‘disease’ par excellence, which we usually associate to a certain period in history; each age tends to have its own. The lepers were socially marginated and the fear of becoming infected often confined them outside the city walls. In Barcelona, by the crossroad towards Montjuïc and Llobregat a hospital for lepers was founded in the twelfth century.¹⁰ It became a part of the Hospital de la Santa Creu since 1401, although only administratively because it remained in the place where it was originally built until the mid-eighteenth century. Alongside it had its own staff, at least a manservant and a maid, as stated in the accounts of the Hospital de la Santa Creu in 1430.¹¹

However, and resuming the discourse regarding poverty, we can determine how the hospital documentation provides many data to pursue a further knowledge. The accountant books, for example, provides us data concerning the offered services; the books of admission, the foundling books, and the books of the insane provide data concerning the conditions in which many of the patients were attended and admitted, whilst the notarial protocols contain many data regarding purchases, contracts, sales, rentals, which illustrate in detail how was the frenetic daily life of these institutions.

3. *The Information Provided by the Books of Admission*

After surveying some books of admission preserved in the hospital’s section of the Library of Catalonia we have been able to acknowledge, among other data, the level of poverty, gender, occupation, the origin and age of many patients. We refer to the books *Libre de la infermaria segon* from 1457, *Llibres d’entrades de malalts* (1474, 1480-1483, 1539-41), *Llibre d’entrada de paisans* (1671-73) and the registers entitled *Entrades d’orats i orades* (1649-56).¹²

Most of the patients were penniless and their poverty is self-evident by the description of their clothes made by the Hospital’s assessments. Generally, the clothes they dressed were designated as ‘robota’ o ‘roba de bassa’, that is, to throw away as waste. For example, in 1457 it is stated

¹⁰ Although we are not going to survey this hospital, we know that it had a chapel dedicated to Santa Maria dels Malalts (the ill) and that in 1218, a couple in Plegamans founded another dedicated to Sta. Margarida; it is for this reason that the Beguins community living there were known as the ‘Margaridoies’. In the XIV century the worship to St. Lazarus was introduced, which justifies why the hospital is known subsequently by this name. (PÉREZ SANTAMARIA 1980, p. 77-116; BOTINAS, CABALEIRO, DURAN 2002, p. 84; VENTEO 2010).

¹¹ AHSCSP, *Llibre de caixa I*, f. 92r. However most of the accountant books from the Hospital de la Santa Creu are missing, fact which underlines the importance of this example due to its high chronology, as stated recently by Manuel Sánchez (in press). Among other data, he studies the patients alimentation and the different employees in charge, the sanitary workers, the servants, the administrators... We can also observe how small previous hospitals also admitted patients, because the manservants of these institutions were paid, continuing to develop their activities as subsidiaries. In fact, the Santa Creu did not provide shelter and food to the sane, only taking in the poor or the needy.

¹² Concerning the patients’ admittance books of the ancient Hospital de la Santa Creu see the essay of Reis Fontanals in this same issue.

that ‘Antoni ve tot ronyós i porta robota’;¹³ whilst a 19 year old servant of the king’s house was admitted with fever that year, recording that he was dressed with ‘robota de poca vàlua’.¹⁴ Other gleaned examples asserting this poverty, expounded by the appearance of the clothing, is exemplified by the case of Mary Ribalta, aged 8 or 10, who ‘ve de la Misericòrdia, ho porta tot dolent’;¹⁵ or either Josep Planas de Cardona, aged 20 years who had a shepherds cape and ‘el demés tot no val un sou’¹⁶. These two examples are from 1671, suggesting that things barely changed over the years.¹⁷

3.1. *The Women*

Men were majority among the registered patients in the Hospital de la Santa Creu during 1457, whilst women were only 10%. Over the years, despite the amount of *fembres* would always be lower than that of males, the proportional difference between both would shorten, as stated, for example, in the *Llibre de paisans* from 1671 to 1673. It is obvious that poverty and illness affected everyone regardless of their gender, but the mentioned figures invite reflection and the proposal of hypothesis concerning the reduced presence of women. Generally women enjoyed a more stable life and perhaps their sedentary lifestyle made them less prone to certain diseases or accidents. Additionally, they had been able to weave around themselves a network of familiar and neighbourhood solidarity, that is, they relied on an important social support; and perhaps had minimal ‘medical’ knowledge which allowed them, through home remedies, to heal one another in private (CABRÉ 2005, p. 637-657).

The women annotated in the aforementioned book of 1457 provide us information concerning certain marginalised groups: freedwomen, prostitutes, blind and foreigners without roots. This is the case of the Sardinian woman Estàcia, who was admitted sick of ganglia, yet also Violant Aguilona, from Sant Mateu del Maestrat, ‘dona orba, vench per mar, porta robota per la bassa’ (a blind woman, who came by sea, wearing disposable tattered clothes) or Joana, a Valencian prostitute, ill with fever, who ‘portava una gonella de mescla, un pordomàs morat i una totecha’ (wore a meld gonella, a purple *pordomàs* and a *totecha*). We can quote many others: the Greek Caterina, aged 40, was ‘ferida de ayre’ (wounded by climate) and lived in the ‘carrer Nou’ near the Convent of the Friars Minor, where a made bed, some clothes and two empty boxes were found;¹⁸ Maria d’en Berenguer Corn, slave, who arrived to the hospital with dropsy and died

¹³ ‘Anthony who is taken in dirty and wearing ‘robota’ (tattered clothes)’.

¹⁴ ‘Clothes of a poor value’. Biblioteca de Catalunya, Arxiu de l’Hospital [BC AH] 1, *Llibre d’entrades de malalts*. 1457, f. 22v. Concerning the quotes of the series of books of admission, within the first references we will state the title and entire chronology, yet afterwards we will only indicate the topographic reference.

¹⁵ TN: ‘came from the Misericòrdia and brings everything in a bad condition’

¹⁶ TN: ‘The rest is not worth a *sou*’

¹⁷ BC AH 94, *Llibres d’entrades de paisans*. 1671-1673, f. 1v i 3r, respectively.

¹⁸ BC AH 1, f. 22v.

shortly after. Sança, the wife of a fisherman who came from the houses of Santa Clara, also was admitted with dropsy. And Madona Lladona, beggar, who was admitted ill, dressed a black gonella, a black cloak, and died shortly after.

Within subsequent registers an increase of foreign women is denoted: Francina, a 14 years old girl from Calafell; Francina, widow of Dalmau Cecer, a notary from Perpignan, who was hospitalized on January 28 and died February 16, she was dressed in black and scanty clothes; Joana, daughter of Joan Vidal, from Franciac; Joana, wife of John Belloc, a Moorish farmer; and many others.¹⁹

3.1.1 *Mothers and Sons/Daughters*

Additionally we want to set forth the data of women admitted ill or insane accompanied by their children, or either were pregnant and gave birth in the hospital. Whatever their reality was, the fact is that most of them suffered great poverty, both them and their children: ‘Caterina del florentí, teixidor de seda, ve malalta de vèrtola porta amb si un fill, lo qual doní als infants; porta una cota negra, un gonella verda i un real’.²⁰ Within the children’s books of admission we can also find annotations concerning this fact: it is stated that in year 1428, Margarida de Barbar, wife of a black sailor, was admitted sick with an infant named Jaume, who left the hospital with his mother when she healed (VINYOLES, GONZÁLEZ 1982, p. 278, nen 75). Data also states an insane woman who gave birth to a girl in March 1427, hospitalised with the foundlings and died two months after (VINYOLES, GONZÁLEZ 1982, p. 277, nena 21). Returning to the books of admission, we can observe several examples: Eulalia, widow of a farmer from Sants Pere Ortigues, was admitted sick, and dressed a woollen good coat and another one tattered, accompanied by her son Gabriel aged 3, who wore a small woollen coat, another tattered; the mother died and the infant remained in the hospital.²¹ An insane women, married to a linen weaver of Sant Martí Sarroca, who had three children, took the smallest one with her to the hospital, aged 3 months.²² Joana Nicolaua ‘va venir partera’²³, dressed very poorly, and gave birth to a girl who was taken to the wet-nurse.²⁴ Antoni Font, from Noves (bishopric of Urgell), was admitted wearing tattered clothes, and brought his wife Maria and two children to the hospital; Maria died two days after, also the death of one of the infants is registered, yet we do not know the fate of the other.²⁵

¹⁹ BC AH 3, *Llibre d’entrades de malalts. 1480-1483*, f. 23r-26v.

²⁰ ‘Caterina [spouse of the] Florentine, silk weaver, is admitted sick with ganglia and she comes with her son, who is assigned with the other infants; she wears black coat, green gonella and owns a ‘real’ BC AH 1, f. 68v, 52r, 65v i 51v, respectively.

²¹ BC AH 2, *Llibre d’entrada de malalts. 1473-1479*, f. 81r.

²² BC AH 197, *Llibre dels orats i orades. 1649-1702*, f. 3r.

²³ ‘entered in labour’

²⁴ BC AH 6, *Llibre d’entrades de malalts. 1539-1541*, f. 1r.

²⁵ BC AH 94, f. 20r.

3.2. *The Men*

3.2.1. *Beggars*

Obviously among the poor there were people from the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups. We have stated above that in medieval society there are two kinds of poor: the beggars and the ashamed. The latter were the indigent who lived from the collected public alms.²⁶ The aforementioned book of 1457 details six of them, plus the women documented above. One came from Britain and had an ill thigh. Francesc Roca, from Barcelona had fever and died two days after entering the hospital. Pasqual Llätzer was also sick, as Guillem d'Orta, who was wearing at his admission 'un caputxó, gonella e faset tot de burell i camisa'²⁷ and 12 deniers. Guillem Francesc was an old man and died shortly after his hospitalisation.²⁸ Therefore, from this enumeration we can assert that beggars were admitted because their poorness was built-up with their sick condition.

Additionally, we can observe the difficulties that the freedman had in overcoming poverty, such as the case of a black man, ill with fever and dressed in tattered clothes; or either Antoni de Viure, who had been a slave, or Jordi, who also had been enslaved and arrived in 'pastera'²⁹, he was ill with fever and he wore a woollen cloak, gonellot and chemise. In exchange, details concerning salves are uncommon. Almost as an exception we state the data of Feliu, slave who came by sea and arrived speechless to the hospital in 'pastera', who died the same day and wore no more than a hood and black braies.³⁰

3.2.2. *Foreigners*

Another noticeable feature is the great presence of foreigners.³¹ Many were newcomers from rural areas of the country or even more distant lands, who moved to the city in search for work, hoping to find better living conditions. Yet their migrant status made them vulnerable, due to the lack of roots and because they had no family or neighbourhood shelter. This is the case of a boy of 18 years old, who came from Vallderoures, who 'vench tot dolorós, porta robota tot de pocha vàlua,

²⁶ We have been able to document the scanty inventory of assets from Gabriel Roig, who died in the hospital in 1468. The deceased named himself as 'poor mendicant' who lived in the house of Lluís d'Espanya, the see gravedigger (Arxiu Històric de la Ciutat de Barcelona [AHCB], Notarial I-12).

²⁷ A red hood, gonella and braies all of wool, and chemise

²⁸ BC AH I; we can state the quoted beggars on folios 21v, 44r, 46r, 53r i 72r.

²⁹ The 'pastera' is a rudimentary bed for the transportation of the sick or wounded (the definition can be consulted online at *Diccionari català-valencià-balear* d'Alcover i Moll, <http://dcvb.iecat.net/>; checked on october 2013).

³⁰ *Ibidem*, f. 36r, 63r i 74r.

³¹ In the book of admissions of year 1457 we state 365 patients; only the origin of 113 is detailed, who are from 80 different provinces of a wide variety, since towns Barcelona, from throughout Catalonia or other places in the kingdom, from the Basc Country, Castile, different places of France, numerous Italian locations...

diners ne malla. Fou interrogat si tenia res, dix que tenia a la taverna d'en Salomó a la Bocaria un sarró amb dues camises y un dart'.³² There are also records from students who were guests or servants from citizens taken to the hospital when sick: a student from Santa Coloma de Farners who was in the house of Martí de la Cavalleria was admitted in 1457, ill with fever and chest pain; he dressed better clothes than the other patients and had a doctrinal book.³³ Finally, other patients came directly from their places of origin, which confirms that the Hospital de la Santa Creu not only admitted people from Barcelona. This is confirmed by the example of Lledó, who lived a league from Figueres, and was admitted with an ill leg and died shortly after.³⁴ Among men from rural environments we can especially underline young farmers and labourers. Among others we can assert the following examples: Vicenç, son of Llorenç, a twelve year old bachelor from Aragon; Peirot lo gascó; Pere Bernat, a 16 year old youngster from la Seu d'Urgell, a farmer from Sant Boi, a 16 year old youngster from the Valle de Aran, and so on.³⁵

Since the books of admission we can also survey each political, social and military specific historical circumstances. Regarding the latter, during the mid-sixteenth century we find displaced French refugees due to the Wars of Religion. Among many cases we would like to underline the one of Peris Alegre, who was 17 years old and came from the bishopric of Toulouse, he was dressed in 'roba de basses' and had no money; and Peiron, aged 30 of Bordeaux, who wore a woollen gonelle, shoes, and chemise yet without money.³⁶

3.2.3 *Galiots*

Among the admitted in the hospital in the mid-fifteenth century we can find labourers and employees, not only from rural areas but also from the galleys. The seaport of Barcelona was the destination of many ships that plied the Mediterranean, for this reason the admission of galley slaves in the hospital, who were subjected to very harsh living conditions, is not surprising: most arrived with fever and an extremely delicate state of health. Certainly, this group was the largest among the hospitalised during that year. We can state data concerning, for example, of a group of boys and adults from different ages and with various symptoms, some healed yet others died a few days after.³⁷ The description of an old galley slave who came from the galley of the governor

³² 'He came all in pain, wearing tattered clothes, he had no money. He was interrogated if he had any belongings, he answered that in the tavern of Salamó in the Boceria he had a bag with two chemises and a lance' BC AH 1, f. 26r.

³³ *Ibidem*, f. 32r.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, f. 23r.

³⁵ BC AH 3, f. 23r.-26v. However, in 1374 the Council banned the ship captains of bringing poor, beggars, slaves or jews to the city (AHCB, Llibre del Consell I-24, f. 46v).

³⁶ BC AH 6, f. 4r-5v.

³⁷ A man from Vinaixa, aged 30, came sick from galleys, he dressed 'a woollen braies a hood and the rest all in tatters'. Another man aged 30, who came also from galleys, died shortly after. And from the same ship also came another man of 30 who wore 'tattered clothes, he assures that the barber galley has his sword pledged 4 sueldos'. The total registers sum 44 admittances. (BC AH 1).

is very graphic; the only data included in the text is ‘porta mig quartà de polls’³⁸; the data from another patient who came from another galley specifies that the patient was admitted with fever and ‘porta robota i polls’³⁹, although he had a steel crossbow at the hostel named Mal Cuinat ‘penyora, per tres reials’.⁴⁰

The foundlings books also provides us information concerning the misery that accompanied the galley slaves and their families. This is the case of a one year old baby, named Blanquina who was abandoned at the hospital in 1438 carrying a note which stated that she he had no mother and her father was convicted to galleys. However, six years later, the father returned for his daughter, who then appears as a carrier (VINYOLÉS, GONZÁLEZ 1982, p. 276 i 283, nena 226).

3.2.4 Labourers, Fishermen and Farmers

Among galley slaves, in the mid-fifteenth century the hospital rooms were full of fisherman, labourers and farmers.⁴¹ Concerning the first, we have evidences of Francí Moliner, aged 30, who was admitted ill with fever dressed in tatters and had no money; Pere Pater was took to the hospital in ‘pastera’ and died shortly after.⁴² Regarding labourers, Martí de Balmaseda⁴³ is recorded very ill with fever, and Guillem Eixeric, aged 28, who dressed ‘un caputxó burell, un gonell de sargil oldà, facet oldà, camisola, calces, sabates i dos sous que es va aturar’.⁴⁴ Regarding farmers, there is an example of a man aged 30 who was admitted very ill and wore ‘un caputxo blanc, un faset blanc, un gonell burell sens manegues, una camisa oldana sense calces, diner ni malla’;⁴⁵ as the case of a farmer from Barcelona aged 20, who arrived penniless to the hospital, yet he stated that the farmer for whom he worked owed him a salary. Finally, a moribund man named Joan de Trevinyo is registered, described as a rogue.⁴⁶

3.2.5. Artisans

Many of the men admitted, as stated above, were poor with no occupation or income. However, some were artisans: shoemakers, tailors, carpenters, weavers, barbers. Some had nothing and

³⁸ He brings half a quarter of lice

³⁹ He has tattered cloths and lice

⁴⁰ ‘Pledged for 3 reals’. BC AH 1, f. 32r. This hostel, situated on the seafront, gave name to a current existing street.

⁴¹ 26 labourers can be stated in the books of admission from 1457 (BC AH 1), together with 15 fishermen and 44 galley slaves.

⁴² BC AH 1, f. 31r i 60r, respectively.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, f. 69v.

⁴⁴ ‘a woollen hood, an old *gonella* made of sackcloth, old braies, chamise, braies, shoes and 2 *sous* which he kept’ *Ibidem* f. 25v. There were also labourers of advanced age, such as a man of 60, ill with fever, who was wearing woollen hood, woollen *gonella*, a *gonellot*, chemise, braies and shoes, all of little value, and a bag with approximately 2 *sous*’.

⁴⁵ ‘a white hood, a white *faset*, a woollen *gonella* without sleeves, an old chemise without braies, very poor’ *Ibidem*, f. 25r.

⁴⁶ BC AH 2, f. 88r i 68v, respectively.

others confirmed only a few assets, that is, without being solemnity poor, they were all lacked of roots and social support, so we can deduce that they were alone men with nobody to care for them when they fell ill. They are the manifestation of an extreme poverty and normally wandered by their own feet; only if they were seriously ill they were took to the hospital in ‘pastera’. Those who needed daily work for a survival could become miserable, as they were vulnerable to the fluctuations of an uncontrolled market economy (LITTLE 1980, p. 45th).

The books of admission of 1457 attests men with few resources of diverse occupations who were part of the artisans collective, among which we highlight the following: a weaver aged 28 who was sick of ‘d’humors mals en la cara’;⁴⁷ a shoemaker ill with yellow fever only wearing tattered clothes who died shortly after; a butcher aged 40 who arrived to the hospital in ‘pastera’ with his arm broken, another butcher aged 30 admitted with fever; a card maker of 27 years of age; a 66 years old carpenter and mason who ‘venc tot tremolós ferit d’ayre’⁴⁸ and died within a few days; a 30 years old tailor ill with ganglia who also died in a short time; a shoemaker of 40 years of age with stomach pain.⁴⁹ We could quote more examples, but most of them had in common their poor status, admitted in the hospital without money and miserably dressed, wearing used clothes more or less worthy. In fact, people of the urban popular classes could be doomed to misery by any unfavourable reason, sometimes unexpected, fact which made them habitual in the hospital.

3.3. *The Age of the Patients*

Additionally we must consider that, although we find data from all ages, the high number of extreme young poor people among the admitted surprises us. It is certain that the age is often neglected, yet when it is recorded we can state that the majority of the patients were aged between 10 and 30 years, at least concerning the books of 1457 and those from 1473 to 1479.

Obviously, there are also frequent admissions of elderly people: for example Frare Joan, aged 80 and hermit of Valls, who was admitted ill with fever and died a few days later; or Galceran Garcia’s wife Maria, aged 70, who dressed only tattered clothes, a women from Tarragona aged 80; a shoemaker admitted with fever who was nearly seventy; a ‘dona antiga’⁵⁰ from Mallorca, admitted ill, who died shortly after, she wore a green gonella and a black towel.⁵¹ Some of the patients were admitted due oldness, such as Terrades, a barber from Barcelona who entered in the hospital ‘de vellesa malalt’⁵² and died shortly after. In this specific case, the data details that they

⁴⁷ Bad humours in the face

⁴⁸ Were admitted trembling by climate wounds.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, f. 34r. He dressed ‘a woollen hood, an old woollen gonella, a gonellot, a chemise, braies, shoes of all kind’, he had a bag with some coins: ‘2 solidi, 2 deniers, 2 ardots and 4 half reales’.

⁵⁰ Old lady

⁵¹ BC AH 1, f. 33v, 36r, 41r i 65v.

⁵² Ill with oldness

sold his assets valued in 1 libra and 14 solidi, this indicates us that the craftsman ended his days in the hospital, old and alone, leaving behind him a scarce legacy. Joana Paula, who worked in the institution for thirteen years, also died of old age, finding at her death ‘fou-li trobada robota i un cove amb drapots’.⁵³

However, we must insist that the people documented are of all ages. Just to provide some data, in the admittance books of 1457 we can observe among others a fisherman aged 30, a laborer aged 40, a Gascon aged 40 and a man from Banyoles, aged 50. The latter was a galley officer who came by sea ill with fever.

Examples of Very Young People Admitted in the Hospital. Books of Admission (1473-1479)

Name	Age	Origin	Clothing	Observations	Sig.
Eulàlia	14	Sant Vicenç dels Horts	All in tatters	A farmers orphan	7v.
Joan Torremoral	13	Castelló de Lluçanès	All in tatters		22v.
Baltasar Costa	13 or 14	Olot	In tatters	He owns one denier	28r.
Bartomeu Rafol	15	Gelida	In tatters	Dead	29v.
Bartomeu Moles	13 or 14	Barcelona	In tatters	Farmer	31v.
Antoni Ferrer	15	Riumort	In tatters	Farmer	33v.
Caterina Moixeric	17	Sant Boi	In tatters	Her father is a farmer	34v.
Berenguer Moragues	18	De les parts d’Urgell	White hood, the rest all tattered	He is brought to Barcelona when infant	35v.
Angelina Baquer	14	Elna	Blue gonell, dark pardomàs, the rest all tattered		42r.
Pere Carbonell	15	Cervera	In tatters	Door 5s. 2.	67v.
Antònia	12 or 13	Manresa	All in tatters		67v.
Francina Maimó	16 or 17	Sant Pere dels Arquells	Woollen gonell, dark pardomàs, the rest all tattered		68r.
Joana Aixats	13 or 14	Salses	In tatters		68r.

⁵³ ‘they found tattered clothes and a basket of cloths’. *Ibidem*, f. 51v. i 74r.

⁵⁴ We do not know if it refers to Eulàlia, aged 14 or 15, Bartomeu Mocar’s daughter, a farmer from Calaf. She was employed as a servant by the tailor Montargull. She was wearing a wrecked coat and the rest in tatters. She affirms she had some possessions in her master’s house, together with the wage he owed her. She died 4 days after. BC AH 2, f. 71r.

Joana Baruta	10	Molins de Rei	Blue gonell, red skirt, two chemises, new shoes, the rest all tattered.	She dies the next day and her clothes are given to the girl Eulàlia ⁵⁴	69v.
Mario Forner	10	Barcelona	All in tatters	Farmer; they owe him a salary	88r.

Nonetheless, the listed cases and the circumstances of extreme necessity which had an important impact on part of the society are not exclusive from the medieval world. If we make a chronological jump forward, observing, for example, the civilian books of admission from years 1671-1673, we will still find an equal situation: men and women of very diverse origin, wearing worn out and poor cloths. Yet not only adults, because children remain as the weakest collective. Thus, we can state the data of girls who were admitted sick in the Hospital after their entrance in the Misericòrdia: Maria Ribalta, aged 8 or 10, daughter of Josep Ribalta from Tarragona, she was admitted with everything in a bad state; Teresa coming from the Misericòrdia, she did not know who her father was, nor where was she from, she was 12 years old, and she was wearing doublet, skirts, chemise and shoes. Their were also anonymous people found sick on the streets: on July 19, 1671, a woman was brought to the hospital with a ladder, which was probably used as a stretcher, the documents state that: ‘la qual quan és estada ací es estada morta, ningú no ha sabut lo seu nom, la qual portava només faldilles y camisa’;⁵⁵ Joan, from Mallorca, who was dressed with leather braies, blue camisole, hat, sandals and chamise, all rags, he died some days after. In the same way as in medieval documents, these later books are an extraordinary window to acknowledge in which way the poor dressed: women wore hood, apron, skirt, doublet, chemise, socks and shoes... And men wore hat, cloak, chemise, *balons*, shoes or sandals. Obviously, some were dressed as sailors.⁵⁶

4. *The Insane*

Since its origins, one of the main tasks of the Hospital de la Santa Creu was the admittance of people suffering from mental illness. Although the books of the insane are dated in subsequent times, in the first accountant book preserved (1430) we can already state people in charge of their care, who had their salary punctually paid.⁵⁷ Although we do not to consider the issues concerning the procedures and the diagnosis when managing these diseases, we can state that the dumb and the people who for whatever reason did not speak were also admitted as insane. Observing the insane books of admission from 1656 we find a wide range of men and women

⁵⁵ ‘she was dead when admitted, nobody knew her name, she was only wearing a skirt and a chemise’

⁵⁶ BC AH 94, f. 1v, 2v, 6r, 9r, 11v i 14r.

⁵⁷ AHSCSP, *Llibre de caixa I*, f. 83v. To Caterina, widow of Bernat Bruguers, servent of the insane, was paid the salary of four finished moths in january: 2 lliuras and 4 solidos.

from different ages, which usually are annotated as very poor and came from all over Catalonia. For example, the record state that Maria Àngela Capdevila, aged 40, was married to Montblanc, that her parents were dead and she had no brothers or sons, she was brought with a document from the town consul certifying that ‘no té possibilitat per sustentat-se sens lo arrimo del present hospital, per on consta que son gent de pocha o ninguna hacienda’ (she is unable to sustain herself without the help of the hospital, since it is said that they are people with little or no possessions whatsoever); she was also decently dressed with a cloth skirt, a silken doublet very used, white shoes and a good chemise, she was penniless.⁵⁸ This text often makes us think that the insane were probably under the charge of their own family or third parties, if they could afford it, and that the more helpless obtained certificates from the local authorities so they could be admitted at the general hospital in Barcelona.⁵⁹

Among this group there are also a significant number of young people: Margaret, maiden and daughter of Magdalena Durana, from Gelida, poorly dressed; Maria, a black maiden, daughter of Antoni Gota, a black carpenter from Garriga; Josep Prat, aged 18 who was admitted at the hospital, the doctor gave order that when healed ‘lo assentassen en lo present libre perquè ès orat’.⁶⁰

Some were picked from the street without knowing their identity, as the case of a child of 11 years old, found some months ago, dressed in rags, and admitted in the hospital; once identified they knew he was Josep Sisterna, youth aged 11, from Barcelona orphan of Pere Sisterna, a youth’s teacher, also stating that he had no money or assets.⁶¹ In another admission at the end of October 1656, it is recorded that:

va arribar en esta santa casa una fadrina d’edat de 22 anys, poc més o manco que la trobaren per la present ciutat fent lo orat i diu qui’s diu Anna Cabratosa, era natural del Besalú, filla de Francesc de Cabratosa, pagès i de Margarida, quan la dita orada tornà en son seny confirma tot lo predit.⁶²

In other words, we are implicitly advised that the girl was suffering from amnesia and she recovered her memory at a given time. Other cases illustrate that sometimes the admission of the insane was not perpetual. We sate for example, on 25 March 1658, the admittance of Maria Angels Camp, maid aged 16, daughter of the farmer Miquel Camps and Eulalia, from Ametlla del

⁵⁸ BC AH 197, f. 10v.

⁵⁹ Esperança, aged 30 and from Valls, married, she had a son of 7 years old from her first husband and a daughter aged 2 from her second marriage. We know that she was admitted in the hospital with the insane, and the data states that she was poor, without money or assets and the clothing she wore were ragged. *Ibidem*, f. 11v.

⁶⁰ ‘they recorded him in the book because he is insane’ *Ibidem*, f. 2r, 3r i 67v, respectively.

⁶¹ *Ibidem*, f. 17v.

⁶² ‘this holy house admitted a maiden aged 22, they found her in the present city acting more o less insane and she is named Anna Cabratosa, from Besalú, daughter of Francesc Cabratosa, farmer, and from Margaret, when the aforementioned insane returns to her senses she will confirm everything said’, *ibidem*, f. 9r.

Vallès, who left the hospital on June 30 1658, by order of the administrators, and was delivered to the innkeeper from Barcelona Bernat Roca, her uncle from Valencia.⁶³ Finally, we would like to highlight the episode of a Castilian man aged 32 sent to the Hospital by the Inquisition, no name is recorded, and he was probably consigned because the ‘holy’ institution deduced that he was not a heretic, yet he was mentally ill.

An interesting case is that of a man who was admitted as insane. In July 1655 arrived ‘en esta santa casa un orat que no parlava, lo qual després de alguns dies que estava en casa hi hagué qui el conegué y digué que era fill de pares incògnits i fill de la dita casa i que es deia Bernat Bartolí, que havia pres el nom de casa de Bartolina d’Igalada que l’havia criat de llet’.⁶⁴ When he recovered speech he confirmed it ‘fonch persona que lo temps que espigué en esta santa casa tingué alguns intervals de bon dictamen de rahó y digué que certes persones li devien algunes corteres de blat en Igalada’.⁶⁵ Finally he died ‘en esta santa casa’⁶⁶ in January 1656.⁶⁷

As for deaf and mute people, because of their dysfunction, they were hopelessly doomed to marginalization. The difficulty of their communication with others made them to be considered as insane or mentally ill and their social integration was very difficult or impossible. For example: Joan, bachelor aged 18, mute, ‘lo qual ha dies que era en la porta de l’hospital’, he was finally admitted, yet died shortly after.⁶⁸ In the book of the insane of 1649 a mute is registered ‘simple, d’edat de 36 anys poc més o manco’,⁶⁹ he was from Sant Esteve de Bas; and a mute aged 22 ‘no se sap de quin lloc és, porta faldilles i jaquet de cordellat molt usats, davantal, camisa, sense diners’.⁷⁰

5. Poverty in the books of Foundlings of the Fifteenth Century.

Foundlings books are probably the saddest side of the hospital’s documentation, approaching us to those who we consider as the most disadvantaged, that is, the infants or children who were abandoned, often wrapped in clothes or very poorly dressed, thus sheltered within straw baskets. In most cases, the abandonment was not desired, but the parents and mothers had no other way out in trying to offer their descendants a chance of survival and future social integration. However,

⁶³ *Ibidem*, f. 16r

⁶⁴ ‘to this holy house a speechless insane, who after some days of staying someone recognized, saying he was the son of unknown parents and his name was Bernat Bartolí, who had taken the name from the house of Bartolina from Igalada who raised him since he was a boy’

⁶⁵ ‘during the time he was in this saint house he had moments of lucidity and affirmed that certain people owe him some ‘quarteras’ of wheat in Igalada’

⁶⁶ ‘in this holy house’

⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, f. 9r.

⁶⁸ ‘who has been at the hospital doors for some days’ BC AH 2, f. 94r.

⁶⁹ ‘simple, aged 36 more or less’

⁷⁰ ‘of unknown origin, she is wearing very worn out skirts and woollen jacket, apron, chemise, without money’ BC AH 196, *Orats y orades. 1621-1647*, f. 4r i 50v, respectively

there are exceptions: a child who was baptised with the name Esteve Joan ‘paria solament ser nat car tot era ple de sang e l’ombrigol no li havien lligat, ens paria que l’haguessin tirant ab les mans’.⁷¹

In this chapter we focus exclusively on the books of admission of foundlings from the years 1426-1429 and 1435-1439, —with their corresponding despatch notes— and on the *Llibre de afermaments dels expòsits i expòsites* from the fifteenth century. Undoubtedly, the most interesting documents on the topic at hand are the written or dictated parents’ notes, which the foundlings carried when abandoned at the hospital’s doors. These notes are the reflection of the starkest poverty and allow us to observe that the parent’s decision to abandon the child was due to the extreme poverty they suffered. The infant Joan Francesc was abandoned when he was only 6 months, dressed very poorly and carrying a despatch note which stated: ‘Aquest infant ha nom Johan és d’un lloc pobre, lo pare e la mare jauen malalts, so que despenen los donen per amor de Déu, plàcie-us que li donets bon recapte, que, en ma fe, fill és de bon matrimoni’ (VINYOLES, GONZÁLEZ 1982, p. 272, nen 101);⁷² he died in the wet-nurse’s house nine months later. However, on the note carried by Genís Gil it could be read: ‘aquest infant ha nom Genís, és ledesma de leial matrimoni, mas que som pobres com Job, és desmamat e no han de què lo prové, som carregats d’infats e ella prenyada’ (VINYOLES, GONZÁLEZ 1982, p. 105, albarà 273)⁷³; this child survived his first infancy. As for the despatch note that accompanied Eufrasina, it illustrates us concerning the state of poverty suffered by those marriages ‘laden’ with children:

Filla de matrimoni, són tan miserables que no és en dir, perquè la mare puga avastar alguna cosa per prevenir ella e son marit ab altres infants pochs que han, a és mesa a dida e fa compte que d’aquí un o dos anys ella haurà gonyada soldada e pagarà a vosaltres (VINYOLES, GONZALEZ 1982, p. 273, nena 116).⁷⁴

Unfortunately Eufrasina died in the hospital a few days later. Concerning Joan Dionís, he was provided for some days ‘per amor a Déu amb almoines de bones persones, e per çò que no es podia pus sostenir és estat remès’ (VINYOLES, GONZALEZ, 1982, nen 125, p.273);⁷⁵ he died two months later at the wet-nurse’s house in El Pont d’Armentera. And Andreu Marc, eight months old, was personally taken to the hospital by his parents, Ramon de Pla, carder, and his wife, who

⁷¹ ‘he seemed a newborn because he was full of blood and his navel had not been tied, it seemed to us that he had been hauled’, AHSCSP, Expòsits, dides 1426-1429. Vol. II. Inv. 7. Expòsits, llibre 3 (VINYOLES, GONZÁLEZ 1982, p.277, nen 62). From now on we will quote these despatch notes referring to the tables and their publication (VINYOLES, GONZÁLEZ 1982, page where the despatch note is published, boy/girl, and table number).

⁷² ‘This child’s name is Johan he is from a poor place, his father and mother lie sick, reason why they dispose him by the love of God, we request you his shelter, who, under my concern, is son of a good matrimony’

⁷³ ‘This child is named Genís, he is legitimate from a loyal matrimony, yet as poor as Job, he is weaned and they have nothing to feed him, we are laden with infants and she is pregnant’

⁷⁴ ‘Daughter of matrimony, it is a fact that they are so miserable, because the mother has little to provide for her and her husband and her other children, she has become a wet nurse and accounts that in one or two years time she will have won a salary to pay you’

⁷⁵ ‘for the love of God with alms of good people, and this is why he could not be sustained and he was returned’.

was admitted ill in the house of women; in the dispatch note they confessed that they had no other choice to abandon their child ‘per pobresa e inòpia no podien cuidar d’ells mateixos i de llurs infants’ (VINYOLES, GONZÁLEZ 1982, p. 278, nen 80).⁷⁶

Especially illustrative is the note carried by Eulalia:

Honrats senyers aquesta infanta és batejada, la qual ha nom Eulària et es ledesma, perquè honrats senyors lo pare és en viatge he s’i espera tots jorns, e la mare es malalta de febre, perquè honrats senyors la mare no ha de que pusca passar, e per ço que la dita infanta no muyra per mal recapte ella vol passar aquesta vergonya, per ço que la infanta haja bon recapte e d’açò vos suplica e vos prega molt que per amor de Déu que la dita infanta haja bon recapte, car si plau a Déu hi serà prest e farà rahó a l’honorable hospital (VINYOLES, GONZÁLEZ 1982, p. 274-75, nena 189).⁷⁷

The girl was 9 months old and she was well dressed in black, she was wearing a ring and some black *paternostres* of coral, and nine months later, on May 18 1438, she was returned to her mother.

Some of the dispatch notes refer, also, to the perception the poor had concerning the charitable work of the hospital. Catherine Eulària was left poorly wrapped: ‘Sia-vos ecomanada per amor de la passió de Nostre Senyor Jesucrist, que quan risc ha pasada sinó per amor de Déu e esperança de vosaltres i de l’hospital’ (VINYOLES, GONZÁLEZ 1982, p.263, nena 202);⁷⁸ yet we know that the girl survived the first infancy. In other cases the love of God is frequently quoted, and sometimes the infants left in the hospital are named as child of Our Lord, referring to the hospital as a space of hope, as God’s house.⁷⁹

One of the most disturbing episodes is that of Joan, an abused child, son of a Valencian beggar. Two women of the city took pity on him, and took him to the hospital in a very bad state:

digueren les dites dones que lo dit pare havia penjat lo dit infant en un taronger per les aixelles, que ab una cadena batia lo dit infant estant nuu, e l’infant confirma les dites paraules, car és d’edat de cinc en sis anys.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ ‘Due to poverty and scarceness they could not take care of themselves and their children’. The child died at the wet-nurse’s house when he was aged 2.’

⁷⁷ ‘Honoured sirs this infant is baptised, her name is Eulalia and she is legitimate, because honoured sirs her father is traveling and they daily wait for him, and her mother is ill with fever, so honoured sirs her mother has nothing for survival, and so that the aforementioned child does not die because she has not been provided her mother faces this shame, for the child to be under good care begging you and praying for God’s sake that the aforementioned child finds good care, for if she pleases God he will be disposed to make the honourable hospital enter in good reason.’

⁷⁸ ‘We leave are son in your hands by the love of Our Lord Jesus Christ, for she has passed through risks but with the love of God and your hope and the hospitals’

⁷⁹ ‘An infant of Our Lord is entrusted to you’, her name is Margarida Brígida, she is poorly dressed, but she has spare clothes and a string round her arm; she survived the first infancy (VINYOLES, GONZÁLEZ 1982, p. 258, nena 83). Salvador ‘provide him well because the house of God will be well satisfied’; he died in the hospital when he was aged 4 (Ibidem, p. 262, nen 17).

⁸⁰ ‘the aforementioned women affirmed that the aforementioned father had hung the infant from an orange tree by the armpits, and being the infant naked he beat him with a chain, and the infant confirms these words, because he

Thus fortune did not smile much at Joan, who died two months later (VINYOLES, GONZALEZ 1982, p. 278, nen 76).

5.1. *Endemic Poverty. The Foundlings who Came Back.*

We can follow the endemic poverty cases of those who return to the hospital. We observe how some of the foundlings who had been refuged by the institution were again admitted ill, although they are few, the documents show us the difficulties that these infants without family roots could have throughout life. Genís who had been placed as a weaver apprentice, was taken ill to the hospital by his master, and it is recorded that he was a lame and sickly child: ‘fou tornat a l’hospital e morí de afany que havia ja lonch temps en si mateix, e era coxo’.⁸¹ Antoni Bainer, son of the house, ‘ve malalt de vèrtola, porta robota’⁸² dying the same day of his admittance. Also Carles, son of the hospital too, aged 12, returned sick.⁸³

6. *Protocols of the Hospital Notary*

6.1. *Integration of the Infants*

Notarial documentation also provides us the opportunity to follow the lives of the foundlings throughout their childhood and adolescence, which sometimes is very short due to the high rate of infant mortality (VINYOLES 2013, p. 291-321). We can find among the records death certificates and the price of burials paid by the hospital. Yet we can also rely on the notarial protocols of the house of the Santa Creu which illustrates us how these children could attain integration within society through employment or apprentice contracts, and how some of the hospitals’ daughters were provided with a dowry and married.

We will survey some examples. Joana, ‘*puel·la hospitalis Santa Crucis*’ aged 18, marries an immigrant shoemaker, Bernat Vico, neighbour of Barcelona and from Montemilia (Duchy of Savoy), who received 25 lliures as dowry from the prior of the hospital, in her name, deposited in the Taula de Canvi de Barcelona.⁸⁴ As accustomed, Bernard contributed with an increase⁸⁵

is 5 or 6 years old’.

⁸¹ ‘he was returned to the hospital and died of effort due he had been long time sick, and he was lame’ BC AH 696, *Llibre de afermaments dels expòsits i expòsitas... 1401-1446*, f. 3r.

⁸² ‘came sick with ganglia, wearing tattered clothes’ BC AH 1, f. 36r.

⁸³ BC AH 2, f. 85r.

⁸⁴ The *taula de canvi* (exchange table) or simply *taula* (table) was a medieval financial institution, considered as the most direct precedent of public banks. It was ran by the *canviadors*, or coin exchangers, who conducted currency exchange. In Barcelona the *taula* was first open in la ‘llojja’ (the market) on 20 January 1401, approving its procedural ordinances the same year. It was symbolically covered with a mat in which the city arms were represented.

⁸⁵ The increase or ‘escreix’ corresponds to the amount added by the prospective husband to the feminine dowry, which normally was the equivalent of the half of the amount. If the women widowed she became the usufructuary, disposed subsequently to their sons or daughters, and if not any, it returned to the spouse’s family.

of 12 lliures and 10 sous. However, the attorney stated that if Joana died childless, half the 25 lliures dowry should return to the hospital, whilst he could freely bequeath the rest at his desire; concerning the assignment increase, always in case of death, it would be disposed to the spouse's heirs.⁸⁶ At this point, under penalty of 200 sous, they promised to formalise the betrothal by means of solemn marriage before July 10 (the date of the protocol is June 27, 1456). As an interesting data, we must underline that the book of foundlings of 1438 records a girl named Joana, abandoned on March 9 when she was only three months, which due to the date accordance we could possibly identify with the girl who married the Savoyard shoemaker.

Another life episode is the one characterised by Joan Sagalers, who recognises that his future wife Eulalia, aged 20, who was servant of Nicolau Ermengol, furrier, assigned 25 lliures of her master for her dowry; he provided an increase of 12 lliures and 10 sous.⁸⁷

These foundling girls, though, were socially integrated by marrying men of vulnerable collectives such as foreigners, labourers and poor peasants. That is, we again encounter the endemic poverty above mentioned, and we can newly state it through the history of a girl named Caterina Sabata (VINYOLES 1989, p. 255-272). She was left at the hospital's doors in 1438, indicating the dispatch note that she had already been through great risk and she had been taken to a wet nurse, first in Barcelona, and after to Manresa. Subsequently she was employed as a servant, and finally, in year 1456, the prior of the hospital married her to a young and poor farmer from Sarral (Conca de Barbera), who shortly after was admitted sick in the hospital.⁸⁸

Moreover, this documentation still approaches us the social integration options the children had, especially through the apprenticeship and work designated since youngsters, due to most of the contracts were subscribed by the hospital responsible with the master craftsmen or those families requiring domestic service, always under the supervision of the notary of the institution. In the following chart we see some examples:

⁸⁶ AHSCSP, Protocols, not. Gabriel Bofill, 1454-1456, f. 82v-83r.

⁸⁷ *Ibidem*, f. 55v-57r. (gener de 1455). In f. 7v there is the record of Vilatorra, sawyer, and from Antònia *llora*, a girl of the hospital, who payed Antoni Serra a dowry of 31 lliures, that is, the salary of 13 and a half years for her service duties.

⁸⁸ BC AH 1, f. 87r.

*The Afermaments of Boys and Girls of the Hospital Recorded in a Notarial Manual of Gabriel Bofill (1454-1456)*⁸⁹

Name girl / boy	Age (years)	Master/mistress	Contract	Duration (years)	Salary	Folio
Caterina	14	Jaume Marques i Maria	Seamstress apprentice	5	15 ll. / 60 s. year	50r.
Joana Graidà	15	Ferran Ferriza i Isabel	Servant	3	8ll. 5s / 55s. year	51r.
Clara	7	Joan Parés i Francina	Servant	12	25 ll.*	52v.
Joana Agustina	6	Aldonça v. Joan Roure	Servant	12	25 ll. / 2 ll.10 s. year	54r.
Miquel	8	Socis barreters a la Bòria	Hatter apprentice	10	10 ll. final	56v.
Constança	6	Bartomeu Bertran	Servant	12	25 ll.*	63r.
Elisabet	5	Joan Bernat i Eufrasina	Servant	13	25ll.*	65r.
Paula	6	Arnau Olivella i Ursula	Servant	12	25ll.*	68r.
Brianda	8	Jaume Ros i Isabel	Servant	9	20ll.	72r.
Joana Agustina	7,5	Julià Pelegrí i Eulàlia	Servant	12,5	27ll. 10s.	74v.
Violant	11	Pere Aguilar i Isabel	Servant	7	20ll.	91r.
Miquela	8 or 9	Angelina v. Nicolau Caules	Servant	10	25ll.	93v.
Joana	----	Pere Padró, sastre	Apprentice	12	12ll.	94v.
Isabel	10	Isabel v. Pere Castelló	Servant	8	20ll.	99r.
Marquesa	13	Isabel v. Antoni Blanc	Weaver apprentice	6	12ll.	99v.

6.2. The Expenses of the Poor

The hospital subsisted by charitable donations, small contributions of people from all social conditions, testamentary legacies more or less numerous and institutional aid. In addition, they tried to earn the expenses generated by their patients, yet this was often not achieved. In theory, the particular's assets of the patients who died childless were disposed for the hospital's patrimony, but it was not always in this way, as sometimes the clothes were distributed among the other sick.

⁸⁹ AHSCSP, Protocols, not. Gabriel Bofill, 1454-1456.

* Since the girls are aged 8, the salary was annually paid in the 'Taula de Canvi'. In case of death before ending the contract, the proporcional part of the aforementioned salary was kept by the hospital, as stated in the documentation.

Joana, a maid aged 10, daughter of Antoni Baruta from Molins de Rei, was admitted on 3 October 1474, she was wearing a blue tunic, red skirts, two chemises, and new shoes, the rest was tattered; she died shortly after. The chambermaid stated that the prior gave orders to donate everything to Eularieta, a sick little girl attended in the same room.⁹¹

The parents who wanted to recover the children they abandoned had to assume the expenses generated during the child's stay in the hospital, and in the same way, the institution received the small salary earned by the boys and girls if they died whilst serving in their master's house. This means that the poor also contributed in some way to support the institution, although sometimes some sort of compensation could be negotiated. As an example, we can state in the records how Bartomeua, spouse of Francí Cabell, shoemaker, admitted that the administrators had paid her husband 88 sous, which Ferrer Cisteller gave to the hospital in time past, when she had been admitted, in concept of the the wages she owed him when she worked for him as a servant. Bartomeua, in accordance with her husband, compromised to return the money to the hospital if she died without heirs in order to pay her expenses.⁹²

Contracts like the one just mentioned, signed before the notary of the house, offer us a first-hand information about the agreements between the managers of the institution and other beneficiaries of the testamentary bequests. We will see two examples. A working woman who renounced to part of the salary that they owed her and donated it to the hospital: Antònia, widow of Pere Ferrer of Averno (Penedes) donates '*ad reverentiam Domini Nostri Jehsi Christi et contemplatione pauperum hospitalis Sacte Crucis*' 16 lliures owed to her by the heirs of Francí Pujades, which were the quarter part of her 23 years salary when working as 'associated'⁹³ with Eulàlia, spouse of the aforementioned Francí.⁹⁴ The other example is the case of Pere Pau '*pauperum mendicans spunyat oriundus ductatus Athenarum et Neopatria [...], dono dicti hospitali et eius pauperibus*' 16 lliures and 10 sous, owed to him as alm in a will bequest.⁹⁵ In both cases the hospital was the direct heir, reason why it had to share the testator's legacies, whilst we observe how they agreed with other beneficiaries, even the poor, in order to retain the assets on behalf of the institution.

7. Conclusions

We observe positive solidarity and charity private practises to confront poverty, coincidently with the creation of welfare institutions founded by wealthy people, municipalities, but also by

⁹¹ BC AH 2, f. 69v. This data could refer to Eulàlia, aged 14, a farmers' orphan who brought all her clothes in tatters. *Ibidem* f. 7v.

⁹² AHSCSP, Protocols, not. Gabriel Bofill, 1454-1456, f. 61r-v (4 abril 1455).

⁹³ Sometimes, medieval documentation states the word 'sòcia' (associate) to refer to those women who worked together in society without any outstanding hierarchy between them.

⁹⁴ AHSCSP, Protocols, not. Gabriel Bofill, 1454-1456, f. 66r (13 agost 1455).

⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, f. 90r (5 agost 1456).

professional entities, such as brotherhoods or the Church, as in the case of the Pia Almoína, who fed regularly a group of poor. However, the hospitals created in the Middle Ages, endured for centuries, are the institutions which allow us to perceive a better acknowledgment of the facts surrounding poverty and the assistance practices.

Their study brings us to conclude that the people admitted were poor and that most of them left the hospital either healthy or by their own feet. There was obviously a significant number of deaths, but the institution became a true hope of healing. The most miserable left with their possessions, without paying anything to the institution. The hospital collected from those who had some possessions and kept the little bequeathed by the childless deceased. Usually the clothes of those who died were so ragged that they were thrown away or, in case they could be used, they were often given to other patients. Hospitals offered the sick a chance of survival and to the foundlings the possibility of social integration and freedom.⁹⁶

From the data analysed by surveying the books of admission of 1457 we can deduce that the vast majority of the people admitted by the hospital were very poor and they were men. There are a smaller number of women coming from marginalised collectives, but we presume they tended to have a more stable life because they had managed to weave a network of solidarities.

Among the men admitted there were many foreigners, laborers and salaried workers, especially from the rural areas. However, there were also artisans without roots or social support. We could suspect that extreme poverty, the lack of social integration or the hope of healing in the hospital were the main reasons why patients, always belonging to the popular classes, arrived to the hospital by their own feet or either were brought in 'pastera'.

Along these lines we have also taken notice of those words that, in first person, were written by the authors of the foundlings dispatch notes; some of them expressed their own poverty. Whilst other documents bring us closer to the social integration of the foundlings, usually within the lower classes, with the consequent risk of having to return to the hospital in case of developing illness.

Private and institutional solidarity demonstrate that the social needs had to be fulfilled, before and now: the food, the clothing, the protection, the care of children and the sick poor, of any nation and status; all this is eloquent enough to underline it again.

Finally, to conclude, I would like to appropriate the broad definition of poverty suggested by Michel Mollat several years ago; a definition able to encompass the frustrated, the abandoned, the asocial and the marginalized without being specific to any age, any religion, or any environment (MOLLAT 1998, p.12).

⁹⁶ Nicolau Espalter from Lleida claims the amount of a slave he bought on January 13 1497, who stated freedom and not to be a slave, because she was daughter of the hospital of Saragossa (AHPB, Jaume Vilar 245/16 f. 58r. [any 1498]).

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