

Articoli/Articles

THE *HANDING OVER* OF FOUNDLINGS IN THE EARLY
XIX CENTURY: AN UNPUBLISHED STUDY
ON THE MEDICAL AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS
OF NEWBORN BABIES ABANDONED IN THE HOSPITAL
OF CITTÀ DI CASTELLO

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SUMMARY

HANDING OVER OF FOUNDLINGS IN THE EARLY XIX CENTURY

The problems of illegitimate births in the early XIX century. The newborn babies were abandoned at the "Rota" of the hospital. The handing over of the newborn babies to the Rota avoided their being left with unknown persons, who attracted by infant cries from a bundle in front of a Church or Convent might be unreliable though compassionate.

The hospital was the safest place for the babies as it provided immediate care but only after their souls had been given priority. First baptism and then medical care.

For concealment the parents' names were not revealed. The baby was handed over by friends or well-wishers, a midwife or a neighbour that took interest in the baby receiving the required attention.

Introduction

Unpublished documentation regarding the problem of foundlings at the hospital of Città di Castello highlights the mentality of a historical age in which religious aspects mix with political and social ones to such an extent that even medical considerations are secondary to "doctrinarian ones"¹.

Parole chiave/Key words: Handing over - Foundlings-Rota

An illegitimate baby was born. The parents were unknown. The father was married with children and his wife was unaware of a long-lasting or chance relationship, with a raped or consenting woman who had to keep the scandal quiet and not destroy the unity of the family. Or also the baby might have been born to a young unmarried couple with no financial support. They could neither set-up house nor, especially, raise a child in need of loving care and protection.

Poverty often resulted, as nowadays, in bad habits. Wine, the drug of the century, dimmed the dreariness of the home, made forbidden joys the subject of dreams only to awaken to harsh realities. Hence, rage and exasperation, that led to cursing, violent behaviour, all of which the child witnessed with a sense of dismay and impotence. But after all, once he was born what else could you do or what had you to do?

Abortion was often spontaneous, sometimes desired, but more often avoided. Poor medical knowledge and religious fears worked against its diffusion. The baby was delivered in secret, shielded from neighbour's curiosity and protected from the people's gossip, among environmental and emotional difficulties that already made his life miserable. Who could they give him to? Where could they leave him? Perhaps in a church, but who would take care of him? A safer place would probably be better, where early attention could ensure his survival. One obviously thought of the hospital (2).

The Handing Over of Foundlings

The handing over took place through a trusted person, an acquaintance or a person the family knew well, whose name, surname, place of birth, occupation and sometimes the father's name were all recorded. This person usually happened to be the midwife, thoughtful and discrete. He had not to be left in a hurry, as by someone who dashed off immediately after. The newborn baby would thus be entitled to immediate and future

care, through legal acceptance. In fact, all this did not usually happen at night to cover up the secret misdeed, but rather during the day. The midwife presented the baby whom she left with the public institution, the best known and perhaps the most suitable. The child began his life among strangers, although kind and affectionate.

The first question: had he been baptized? The priest came first and then the physician.

Circa le nove antemeridiane dalla Maddalena Viola domiciliata nel territorio di Citerna fu esposto in questa Rota di quest'Ospedale un Fanciullo con fede di essere stato batezzato³ privatamente dal Reverend. Sig. e D. Luigi Rossi Parroco di S. Stefano di Pestrino⁴ sotto il giorno ventisette del decorso mese di Febbraio e di averli imposto il nome di Valentino. In fede Girolamo Lanzi⁵,

that is:

About nine o'clock ante meridiem in the territory of Citerna, a child was handed over in the Rota of this hospital by Maddalena Viola domiciled in the territory of Citerna, who affirmed in faith the baby had been privately baptized by the Reverend Mr. and Don Luigi Rossi, the parish priest in S. Stefano di Pestrino on the 27th of the past month of February. The baby was given the name of Valentino. In faith Girolamo Lanzi.

Likewise, another baby, Giacomo was handed over.

..... alle ore otto ed un quarto antemeridiane dalla Vedova Giulia Martini domiciliata in S. Giustino⁶..... con fede di essere stato batezzato solennemente sotto il dì venticinque nella Chiesa Cattedrale del Borgo S. Sepolcro dal Parroco don Pietro Ricciarelli⁷,

that is:

at quarter past eight ante meridiem by the widow Giulia Martini domiciled in San Giustino with assurance of having been solemnly baptized on the 25th in the Cathedral church of Borgo S. Sepolcro by the parish priest Don Pietro Ricciarelli.

In contrast, a baby girl handed over on the 22nd of April 1826 by Maria Ringa domiciled in Villa di Castelguelfo⁸ had no sign of having been baptized⁹. The same thing is reported by Lanzi who declares that on the 26th of May 1826

fu esposta in questa Rota di quest'Ospedale una fanciulla senza avere alcun segno d'essere stata batezzata, e perciò nello stesso giorno fu mandata al Sagro Fonte di questa Cattedrale, e le fu imposto il nome di Monica Salvatori¹⁰,

that is:

a baby girl was handed over in the Rota of this hospital who bore no sign of having been baptized and therefore she was sent on the same day to the Sacred Font of this Cathedral, and she was given the name of Monica Salvatori.

On the same day, the manuscript emphasizes. Perhaps the baby was in serious need of medical care: hence the urgent requirement that she was first baptized.

Another manuscript recalls events that had taken place on the 13th of July 1826 at about four o'clock ante meridiem, a boy was handed over..... Quite an unusual time, possibly to assure concealment.

Circa le quattro antemeridiane fu esposto un fanciullo..... Il Fanciullo aveva nelle fascie un piccolo biglietto con le seguenti parole: Luigi figlio legittimo di Pietro Bianchi per assoluta necessità si espone in quest'Ospedale fino a che sarà ristabilita la Madre, è stato batezzato¹¹,

that is:

At about four o'clock ante meridiem a boy was handed over..... The baby boy had in his swaddling bands a little note with the following words: Luigi, legitimate son of Pietro Bianchi is for absolute necessity being handed over to this hospital until the mother recovers her health, he has been baptized.

Since the boy was in extreme need of medical care his father did not hesitate to reveal his own identity. Perhaps he brought the boy to the Rota of the hospital at Città di Castello. The mother's name remained unknown, perhaps not to spread news of her health and of the poor economical conditions of the family. However, Girolamo Lanzi goes on with further investigation. The baby's name was Luigi, and the mother's name Donna Tommasa Passerini. They lived in S. Anastasio¹² and Baptism was administered in the church of S. Giustino on the 22nd of May by the Archpriest Don Biagio Biagioni, who reported everything to the Criminal Chancellor of the Bishop. Physicians could, in this case, take immediate care of the baby. He had been baptized, we are absolutely sure. A note would not have been enough, but it contained the name of the "legitimate" father. Finally subsequent investigation provided valuable information.

Brizio Frati was, instead, handed over on the 26th of September 1826:

Senza avere alcun segno di essere stato batezzato, e nel giorno poi posteriore fu mandato al Sagro Fonte di questa Cattedrale (13),

that is:

bearing no sign of having been baptized, for which the day after he was sent to the Sacred Font of this Cathedral.

The time which elapsed between the handing over and the Baptism was very short in order to give, later on, full opportunity for medical care. The same thing happened with Benedetta Luciani. Brought to the Rota of the hospital in the evening of the 20th of March 1827, she was baptized on the following morning, as the Cathedral opened¹⁴. Similarly, Diomira Bruschi, handed over

circa le ore dieci antemeridiane da Andrea Stocchi..... non aveva alcun segno di essere stata batezzata quale venne poi mandata al Sagro Fonte di questa Cattedrale....¹⁵,

that is:

at about ten o'clock ante meridiem by Andrea Stocchi, had no sign of having been baptized, resulting in her being sent to the Sacred Font of this Cathedral.....

The same for Camillo Galli, a child brought to the Rota by "Donna Maddalena Mancini domiciled in Villa di S. Maria di Quarata"¹⁶, on the 11th of July 1827¹⁷. Another unbaptized baby came: Eurosia Magni, handed over by the midwife on the 12th of February 1828¹⁸.

The Keeper of the Register of the Foundlings continues to certificate the handing over of unbaptized babies: Filippo Pasqua, brought to the Rota on the 7th of April 1828 by Crescentino Smacchia (19) from Montone; Chiara Benedetti, handed over on the 8th of May 1828 by Donna Margherita Ripi (20) and Luigi Migliorati, both living in the parish of Comunaglia (21); Venanzio Neri by the public midwife of S. Giustino on the 20th of May 1828 (22); finally, the peasant Giovanbattista Grilli, living in the Villa di S. Martino Pareto (23), handed over Claudio Albertini.

Final Comment

It is important to stress that in the early XIX century the foundlings were considered, from a religious and social point of view, human beings under all respects, although the mentality and the society of that century would have developed the illegitimate complex in them. They had body and soul, the former sometimes weakened by laborious and neglected pregnancies; the latter projected to desired aims outside the realm of prejudice.

The physician and the priest: the first encounters. Reason and faith: contemporaneity and symbiosis as well? Certainly: earthly life and future life, the ephemeral and the eternal. However, where necessity threatened to delay the more absolute needs of the spirit, it was necessary to re-establish the correct balance with an undisputed hierarchy: soul first and then body. Theology and science, mystery and intellect.

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¹These are fifteen pages of a manuscript from the Ecclesiastical Archives of Città di Castello that are dated from March 2nd 1823 to November 8th 1828.

²ROSINI, A., *Brevi notizie storiche degli ospedali uniti di Città di Castello* in: *Gli Ospedali Uniti di Città di Castello*, op. cit. 1959, pp. 24-25.

³The manuscript reports this phrase underlined to stress the importance of the baptism that has already taken place.

⁴Manuscript of March 2nd 1823. Ecclesiastical Archives, Città di Castello.

⁵LANZI Girolamo was the Keeper of the Register of the "Esposti". He signed all documents examined in this study.

⁶It is a Municipality in the Alta Valle del Tevere.

⁷A manuscript of July 28th 1825 in which it is stated that in this Register the newborn baby is "filed as no. 919", Ecclesiastical Archives.

⁸It is a locality in the Municipality of Pietralunga.

⁹Manuscript of April 22nd 1826. Also in this document the information that baptism has not been administered is underlined, as a reminder to do it soon.

¹⁰Manuscript of May 26th 1826. Ecclesiastical Archives.

¹¹Manuscript of July 13th 1826. Ecclesiastical Archives.

¹²It is a locality in the Municipality of S. Giustino.

¹³Manuscript of September 27th 1826. Ecclesiastical Archives.

¹⁴Manuscript of March 21st 1827. Ecclesiastical Archives.

¹⁵Manuscript of June 2nd 1827. Ecclesiastical Archives.

¹⁶It is a locality in the Municipality of Città di Castello.

¹⁷Manuscript of July 11th 1827. Ecclesiastical Archives.

¹⁸Manuscript of February 12th 1828. Ecclesiastical Archives.

¹⁹Manuscript of April 7th 1828. Ecclesiastical Archives.

²⁰Manuscript of May 8th 1828. Ecclesiastical Archives.

²¹It is a locality in the Municipality of Umbertide.

²²Manuscript of May 20th 1828. Ecclesiastical Archives.

²³S. Martino Pereto is a locality in the Municipality of Città di Castello.

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LA SCUOLA MEDICA BOLOGNESE
NELLA CULTURA SPAGNOLA

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SUMMARY

THE MEDICAL SCHOOL OF BOLOGNA IN SPANISH CULTURE

The relations between Spanish Scholars and the University of Bologna may be dated back to the time of Saint Raymond of Penafort, Saint Antonius of Lisbon and Saint Dominic of Guzmán. These connections became tighter as, following Cardinal De Albornoz's testamentary disposition in 1364, a "House of Spanish People" was set up inside Saragozza Gate in order to give hospitality to young student desiring to study Canon Law, Theology and Medicine. Students attended constantly up to 1587, greatly contributing to the development of the great Spanish School of the Modern Age. It was only with the Statutes of 1876 that this ancient habit was restored, with the institution of the "Advanced Centre of Post-graduate".

A Bologna la parola "Università" si identificò inizialmente con le due Corporazioni, legalmente riconosciute, degli scolari citramontani (italiani) e ultramontani (stranieri).

Intorno al 1155 queste furono suddivise in Nazioni: romani, campani, toscani, lombardi per i primi (successivamente ridotte a tre, avendo i romani accorpato i campani); francesi, spagnoli, provenzali, inglesi, picardi, borgognoni, pittaviensi, turonensi, cenomanensi e normanni, catalani, ungheresi, polacchi, tedeschi per i secondi.

Le Nazioni poi, agli inizi del XIII secolo (1217) si raggrupparono a costituire le Università dei Citramontani e degli Ultramontani, rette ciascuna da un proprio Rettore e relativo Statuto.

Parole chiave/Key words: Bologna-Medical School-Spain-Relationship