

# ¿Qué pasa en *La Inclusa*? The role of press scandals, doctors and public authorities in the evolution of *La Inclusa de Madrid*, 1890-1935

**Bárbara Ana Revuelta Eugercios (\*)**

(\*) [orcid.org/0000-0002-2449-037X](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2449-037X). Saxo Institute, Faculty of Humanities. University of Copenhagen. [lwq600@hum.ku.dk](mailto:lwq600@hum.ku.dk)

Dynamis  
[0211-9536] 2015; 35 (1): 107-130  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.4321/S0211-95362015000100005>

Fecha de recepción: 5 de mayo de 2013  
Fecha de aceptación: 3 de febrero de 2014

**SUMMARY:** 1.—Introduction. 2.—Wet nurses and the mortality of foundlings. 3.—What happened in *La Inclusa*: the mortality of foundlings and the transformation of the institution, 1880-1935. 3.1.—Evil born of old incidents and abuses: the 1898-1900 press scandal. 3.2.—The discovery of «*la Herodiada*» in 1918 by the Medical Staff of the Provincial Public Assistance. 3.3.—The definitive turning point: 1927. 4.—Final remarks.

**ABSTRACT:** Traditionally, infants abandoned at foundling hospitals were identified as «bastards» and «children of vice» whose health, to all intents and purposes, reflected the moral sins of their parents and thus, led to unavoidable mortality. By late 19th century, several changes challenged that consideration: a growing emphasis on the importance of fighting infant mortality, the appearance of a new, medicalized, ideal of motherhood, the spread of new medical theories, the appearance of disciplines like Child Health, the construction of pediatric wards, and maternity hospitals. The consequences of these changes had their greatest impact at *La Inclusa* due to its location in the capital city, close to the decision-making centres and as focus of the interest of the national media. This article examines the role of the press and the medical profession in successively denouncing *La Inclusa*'s excess mortality during the period 1890-1935. By looking at daily press and medical publications, it sheds light on the uneven consequences of the press scandals denouncing foundlings' extreme mortality in the period. The first scandal (1899-1900) faded without acknowledging any excess foundling mortality; the second (1918) was initiated by the doctors in charge but only produced some changes. The third scandal (1927) was instrumental in bringing about the changes that would turn a century-old institution in a state-of-the art medicalized centre and the change from debris of society to healthy children of foundlings. The effects of the press coverage were not restricted locally to foundlings in Madrid, and had a wider impact: by making the public aware of the dire situation of foundlings, they contributed to the development of legislation related to the fight against infant mortality and the control of mercenary breastfeeding.

**KEY WORDS:** infant mortality, foundling mortality, infant abandonment, Madrid, *La Inclusa de Madrid*.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** mortalidad infantil, mortalidad de expósitos, abandono infantil, Madrid, *La Inclusa de Madrid*.

## 1. Introduction (\*)

Mortality rates in many foundling hospitals from the 15th to the 20th century were in excess of 50%, as taking care of abandoned infants did not mean saving their lives<sup>1</sup>. Abandoned infants arrived in very poor health and were identified as «bastards» and «children of vice» whose health, to all intents and purposes, reflected the moral sins of their parents. Moreover, managing and caring for hundreds and, sometimes, thousands of foundlings, many of whom so young that breastfeeding was really their only option to stay alive, was a near impossibility, because both attracting enough women to be employed as wetnurses and being able to pay them was seldom feasible. Accordingly, a dispassionate account of the unavoidable mortality of foundlings dominated the public discourse<sup>2</sup>.

By late 19th century, but more importantly, early 20th century, the traditional consideration and treatment of foundlings was to be challenged by several developments. In the field of medicine, there was a growing emphasis on the paramount importance of reducing infant mortality and of the role of mothers and breastfeeding in it. This new discourse, propounding a female identity centered around motherhood as the main right and duty of women, helped to rehabilitate the image of single mothers and illegitimate infants. Also, new medical theories spread, disciplines like Child Health appeared, pediatric wards and maternity hospitals were constructed, etc.

The process started locally, with doctors and reformers applying the new ideas and techniques and turning old-fashioned institutions, concerned with infanticide and honor, into maternal and infant care shelters. *La Inclusa de Madrid*, the largest foundling hospital in the country, was the

---

(\*) The research contained in this article stemmed from a doctoral dissertation, Revuelta Eugercios, Bárbara Ana. *Los usos de la Inclusa de Madrid: mortalidad y retorno a principios del siglo XX (1890-1935)*. Universidad Complutense de Madrid, 2011, in the framework of several research projects funded by the Ministry of Science and Innovation (SEJ2005-06334, CSO2008-06130/SOCI, CSO2011-29970) and doctoral grant BES-2006-13707. Additional funding from the Centre for Economic Demography, Lund University, for the continuation of this work is also acknowledged.

1. Pérez Moreda, Vicente. *La infancia abandonada en España (siglos XVI-XX)*. Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia; 2005.
2. Hunecke, Volker. *Intensità e fluttuazioni degli abbandoni dal XV al XIX secolo*. In: *Enfance abandonée et société en Europe, XIV-XIX siècle*. Rome: École Française en Rome; 1991; Pérez Moreda, Vicente. *Las circunstancias del abandono*. In: *Enfance abandonée et société en Europe, XVe-XIXe siècle*. Rome: École Française de Rome; 1991.

most important example of this process, due to its location in the capital city, close to the decision-making centers and as focus of interest to the major newspapers. Its notorious foundling mortality became the study case to achieve a general solution to the problem.

In this article, I study how the role of the press and the medical profession in denouncing La Inclusa's excess mortality during the period 1890-1935 helped to transform that old-fashioned institution into a modern, medicalized center, but also had wider repercussions, contributing to shape the discourse on abandonment and to bring about new pieces of legislation by connecting with the widespread interest in the control of «mercenary» breastfeeding. As the press attempted to look for responsibilities, repeatedly asking «¿Qué pasa en la Inclusa?» (What happens at La Inclusa?), public authorities downplayed the severity of the situation and doctors became the main agents of change.

In order to reconstruct this history, I have obtained information about *La Inclusa* from a variety of sources. First, through a systematic search of newspaper articles from the digital archives of the *Hemeroteca Digital de la Biblioteca Nacional* (National Digital Newspaper Library)<sup>3</sup>, and the individual collections of two contemporary newspapers (*ABC*<sup>4</sup> and *La Vanguardia*<sup>5</sup>) still in business today, resulting in over 800 articles for the period 1853-1936. Factual information has been extracted from 2-5 accounts minimum of each single event to ensure veracity and to produce a view that was balanced, free of ideological bias resulting from specific editorial lines. Moreover, much of the reconstruction has been done using only the sections reporting the discussions of political bodies, such as the Plenary Meetings of the Provincial Council [*Consejo Provincial*], Congress and Senate sections, and the accounts of the proceedings of scientific societies and intellectual conferences, which were more neutral. I have used *noticieros* (current events newspapers), such as *La Correspondencia de España* and *El Imparcial*, considered mostly neutral but still holding a conservative and liberal ideologies, respectively. I have also used the so-called *periódicos de partido* [political party newspapers], to sample the relevance of the events

- 
3. Hemeroteca Digital [updated Jun 2009; consulted Jun 2009-Mar 2010]. Available in: <http://www.bne.es/es/Catalogos/HemerotecaDigital>.
  4. ABC Hemeroteca [updated Jan 2010; consulted Jun 2010-Mar 2010]. Available in: <http://hemeroteca.abc.es>.
  5. La Vanguardia.com Hemeroteca [updated May 2009; cited May 2009]. Available in: <http://www.lavanguardia.com/hemeroteca>.

occurred in La Inclusa for different ideologies. The main newspapers I have used are: the very conservative and minoritarian *La Época*, the liberal *El Heraldo de Madrid*, the posibilist republican *El Globo*, the liberal-leftist *La Voz*, the carlist and catholic *El Siglo Futuro*, the conservative and monarchic *ABC*, etc. *La Vanguardia*, a progressive-democratic Catalanian newspaper published in Barcelona has been used to assess the wider impact of events at La Inclusa. Opinion pieces and features have been also used, reporting the ideology of the publication that originated them. The number of references has been kept to a minimum for simplicity's sake<sup>6</sup>. The Official Bulletin of the State [*Gazeta de Madrid*<sup>7</sup>], in which all legislation approved by the Government was published, has also been used here. Second, I have searched for relevant information in two of the social medicine journals published in Madrid, *La Medicina Ibera* and *El Siglo Médico*, and *Pro-Infantia*, the journal published by the *Consejo Superior de Protección a la Infancia y la Mendicidad* [Council for the Protection of Infancy and the Repression of Begging]. Finally, publications by doctors associated to La Inclusa as well as other publications focused on the institution have also been consulted.

## 2. Wet nurses and the mortality of foundlings

While the purpose behind the appearance of foundling hospitals in the late Middle Ages was to avoid infanticide and the accidental death of children abandoned in the streets, foundling hospitals showed such extreme mortality rates that some modern authors have referred to them as places for the massive destruction of infant lives<sup>8</sup>. Their mortality was so high that Malthus proposed that a good although «unsollicitous» way to check population growth would be to «establish a sufficient number of foundling hospitals»<sup>9</sup> and many similar comments may be found for other countries:

---

6. See for more details: Revuelta Eugercios, Bárbara. Los usos de la Inclusa de Madrid: mortalidad y retorno a principios del siglo XX (1890-1935). Universidad Complutense de Madrid; 2011.

7. *Gazeta*: colección histórica del BOE, 1661-1959 [updated Jun 2009; cited Jun-Ag 2009]. Available in: <http://www.boe.es/legislacion/gazeta.php>

8. Boswell, John. The kindness of strangers: the abandonment of children in Western Europe from late antiquity to Renaissance. New York: Pantheon Books; 1988, p. 45-50.

9. Malthus, Thomas Robert. An essay on the principle of population. Library of economics and liberty. London: John Murray; 1821: II.III.29. Available in: <http://www.econlib.org/library/Malthus/malPlong8.html>. [updated 1 April 2013; cited 10 April 2013].

in Brescia (Italy), some critics proposed changing the epigraph of its institution to «here children are killed at public expense»; and in Spain they talked about «organized infanticide system» and «foundling hospitals existing to ensure [infants] destruction»<sup>10</sup>.

However, neither parents nor institutions considered abandonment as a synonym of infanticide. Families who left children and who, in any case, saw abandonment as a last resort measure<sup>11</sup>, were not only unaware of the institutions' mortality rates, but rather hoped that they could provide a better destiny for their child than they could. Institutions, for their part, did struggle since their creation to offer care to the children they received, but were never successful in mustering enough resources to do so, as feeding hundreds of abandoned infants was never an easy task.

Availability of living-in wetnurses in charge of feeding abandoned infants at their arrival was the crux of the matter. Most wetnurses normally had to nurse up to two or three infants simultaneously and, quite frequently, there were not enough of them. Also, fear of infection often meant that doctors would not allow wetnurses to breastfeed sickly-looking children. In any case, both situations resulted in many infants being administered animal milk (or, in later periods, artificial formula), which increased their mortality risk because the nourishment it provided was deficient, and the practices of administration un-hygienic. In the long term, the only way of safeguarding children's lives was to place them as soon as possible in the countryside with a rural wetnurse. There, wetnurses nursed and cared for them until they reached the age at which they were discharged from the institution (between 5 and 7 years old).

By the early 19th century, foundling hospitals had perfected their ability to recruit wetnurses and to place infants quickly in the countryside, making

- 
10. Álvarez Santaló, León Carlos. *Marginación social y mentalidad en Andalucía Occidental: Expósitos en Sevilla (1613-1910)*. Sevilla: Consejería de Cultura de la Junta de Andalucía; 1980; Bilbao, Antonio. *Destrucción y conservación de los expósitos. Idea de la perfección de este ramo de policía, modo breve de poblar la España y testamento*. Antequera: En la Oficina de Don Felix de Casas y Martínez; 1789; Megino, Alberto. *La Demauxesia. Aumentación del pueblo por los medios de procurar que no mueran 50.000 personas que según un cálculo prudencial y bien formado se pierden anualmente en las Casas de expósitos, en los Hospicios y en las Cárceles de España*. Venecia: 1805.
  11. Lynch, Katherine A. *Infant mortality, child neglect, and child abandonment in European history: A comparative analysis*. In: Bengtsson, Tommy; Saito, Osamu, eds. *Population and economy. From hunger to modern economic growth*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 2000, p. 142-148.

average time until placement a predictor of institutional mortality<sup>12</sup>. As the system worked more or less «efficiently», successfully taking children rapidly away from the institution, the continuing excessive mortality within the premises was explained by doctors as a result of the poor conditions of children at arrival. After all, foundlings were bastards, i.e. the children of vice, immorality and excess, and reflected, in their fragile health, the faults of their parents. Even when populationist ideas supported and enforced the existence of turning wheels and the need for secrecy in Maternity Hospitals to avoid infanticides and save these children, there was a certain degree of acceptance of the inevitability of foundling death: their origins had already, and inevitably, compromised their lives<sup>13</sup>.

The transformations experienced by Western societies between late 19th and early 20th century changed both the public's view of foundling hospitals and the treatment of abandoned infants. Among them, changes in the medical discourse, new technological discoveries, and a new medical agenda were particularly relevant. The fight against infant mortality gave great emphasis to maternal breastfeeding and to the regulation of the wetnurse industry<sup>14</sup>. In this context, foundlings, who depended exclusively on mercenary breastfeeding, rapidly became a significant part of the debate.

The emphasis on breastfeeding and maternal care provided by the medical discourse made women largely responsible for infant survival. This focus on the biological aspects of motherhood was a fitting new basis for the new gender ideology. The old ideal of women as wives and mothers, keepers of the family's honor, had been weakened by opportunities for women: female education and labour force participation, the suffragist movement, etc. The new discourse, while keeping motherhood still at the center of women's identity, removed birth and breastfeeding from the religious sphere and

---

12. Corsini, Carlo. *Materiali per lo studio della famiglia in Toscana nei secoli XVII-XIX: gli esposti*. Quaderni Storici. 1976; 11: 992-1052; Viazzo, Pier Paolo; Bortolotto, Maria; Zanotto, Andrea. Five centuries of foundling history in Florence: changing patterns of abandonment, care and mortality. In: Panter-Brick, Catherine; Smith, Malcolm T., eds. *Abandoned children*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 2000, p. 70-91.

13. González Álvarez, Baldomero. *Higiene del niño abandonado durante su primera infancia*. Discurso leído en la Real Academia de Medicina para la recepción pública. Madrid: Carrión Hermanos, Impresores; 1895, p. 9-11.

14. Rodríguez Ocaña, Esteban. *La construcción de la salud infantil. Ciencia, medicina y educación en la transición sanitaria en España*. Historia Contemporánea. 1998; 16: 19-52.

moved it to the secular, as a moral and biological imperative, motherhood and childcare were both a woman's right and duty<sup>15</sup>.

This shift also had a profound effect in the ideology of abandonment: before, single women were considered unsuitable for motherhood and abandonment (and the protection of honor) facilitated; now, motherhood had a redemptive nature, and breastfeeding and child rearing were their path to rehabilitation<sup>16</sup>. Before, the separation of mother and child immediately after birth had been the norm in maternity and foundling hospitals to prevent infanticide, the new rule became encouraging women to nurse their own babies during the first weeks, intending to delay or deter abandonment.

This shift, combined with a growing awareness of the use of the institution by wedded couples, helped to rehabilitate the popular view of abandoned infants, who started to be seen more as the children of poverty and adverse circumstances than sickly, undeserving children with little or no possibilities of survival.

Other dimensions of the medical change were also relevant in shifting attitudes, changing mentalities and practices. To name just a few, the progress in medical knowledge that allowed diagnosis based on exploratory signs or the development of statistics in the new disciplines of Pediatrics and Child Health contributed to transform children into scientific objects. And while some principles of asepsis and hygiene may have already been known, the further development of new instrumental and techniques, made intervention in their health more effective<sup>17</sup>. Foundling survival was no

- 
15. Knibiehler, Yvonne. *Cuerpos y corazones*. In: Duby, Georges; Perrot, Michel, eds. *Historia de las mujeres*, Madrid: Taurus; 2001, p. 339-388; Nash, Mary. *Identidad cultural de género, discurso de la domesticidad y la definición del trabajo de las mujeres en la España del siglo XIX*. In: Duby, Georges; Perrot, Michel, eds. *Historia de las mujeres*, Madrid: Taurus; 2000, p. 339-388; Nash, Mary. *Maternidad, Maternología y reforma eugénica en España, 1900-1930*. In: Duby, Georges; Perrot, Michel, eds. *Historia de las mujeres*, Madrid: Taurus; 2001, p. 679-703.
  16. Aresti, Nerea. *Médicos, donjuanes y mujeres modernas. Los ideales de feminidad y masculinidad en el primer tercio del siglo XX*. Bilbao: Universidad del País Vasco; 2001, p. 177-185.
  17. For more details on this issue see: Perdiguero Gil, Enrique. *Salvad al niño. Estudios sobre la protección a la infancia en la Europa Mediterránea a comienzos del siglo XX*. Valencia: Guada Litografía, S.L.; 2004; Rodríguez Ocaña, Esteban. *Aspectos sociales de la pediatría española anteriores a la guerra civil (1936-1936)*. In: Peset, José Luis; Saldaña, Juan José, eds. *La ciencia moderna y el nuevo mundo. Actas de la I Reunión de Historia de la Ciencia y de la Técnica de los Países Ibéricos e Iberoamericanos*. Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas; 1985, p. 443-460; Rodríguez Ocaña, n. 14, p. 20; Rodríguez Ocaña, Esteban. *La salud infantil, asunto ejemplar en la historiografía contemporánea*. *Dynamis*. 2003; 23: 27-36.

longer a lost cause, and their extreme mortality started to be considered unacceptable.

### 3. What happened in La Inclusa: the mortality of foundlings and the transformation of the institution, 1880-1935

*La Inclusa de Madrid* was founded in 1572 by the Brotherhood of Our Lady of Solitude and Anguish in the *Convento de la Victoria* and sheltering foundlings soon became its only function<sup>18</sup>. Before 1700, less than 500 infants were abandoned yearly but by 1800 there were more than 1,000 abandonments per year, partially reflecting an increase in legitimate infants<sup>19</sup>. Mortality was around 60-80%<sup>20</sup>. In order to improve the situation, in 1799 the *Junta de Damas de Honor y Mérito*, a board of aristocratic women, associated to the Enlightened Madrid Economic Society and devoted to charitable work, took over the government of the institution, reorganizing it through new regulations, and moving it to new premises. A refitted old building in *Calle de Embajadores*, forming a welfare complex for vulnerable women and children that also included *La Casa de Maternidad*, founded in 1860, a free maternity hospital for single women was the result<sup>21</sup>. Abandonment remained anonymous and the wheel remained open until 1927.

While the institutions were governed jointly by the Junta de Damas, funding and general decisions depended on the Provincial Council [*Diputación Provincial*], the main public authority responsible of governing the province of Madrid, which appointed an overseer alderman to supervise the institution but also the Director, politically appointed, and the Head Doctor, that took care of everyday administrative and medical questions. Doctors and medical students were in charge of attending the births of La Maternidad and foundling health as well as deciding placement timing, treatment and wetnurses inspection. The congregation of the Sisters of the Charity of Saint Vincent of Paul was in charge of running the institution,

---

18. De los Reyes Leoz, José Luis. *El origen de la Inclusa de Madrid*. Madrid: Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 1987.

19. Sherwood, Joan. *Poverty in eighteenth-century Spain: the women and children of the Inclusa*. Toronto: Toronto University Press; 1980, p. 113.

20. Sherwood, n. 19, p. 135

21. Vidal Galache, Florentina; Vidal Galache, Benicia. *Bordes y bastardos: una historia de la Inclusa de Madrid*. Madrid: Compañía Literaria; 1994, p. 62-87.



supervising both servants and the internal wetnurses that nursed foundlings until they were placed in the countryside<sup>22</sup>.

During the period 1880-1935<sup>23</sup>, La Inclusa was frequently featured in Madrid's daily press, concerning charity functions and visits of members of the royal family and the aristocracy, but the largest number of appearances had to do with reports on the extremely high mortality, provoking successive public opinion scandals. Three moments saw alarming headlines such as «What happens in La Inclusa?», «Children dying of hunger», «The tragedy of foundlings» appearing in local and national newspapers: 1898-1900, 1918 and 1927. These scandals had some degree of impact in the way things functioned at La Inclusa, as the Provincial Council could not avoid taking responsibility. However, only after 1927 did things really change. The three events started for different reasons, and triggered completely different reactions from the parties responsible: the medical doctors, and the local and national authorities. The role of the doctors, specifically, was key in the onset of change.

### 3.1. *Evil born of old incidents and abuses: the 1898-1900 press scandal*

The two main problems intrinsic to the working of La Inclusa, i.e. the deficient condition of the premises in which the whole assistance complex was housed and the problem of feeding so many foundlings, had already been discussed by the press in the early 1880s but would not be solved until almost the 1930s. The need for a new building was repeatedly stated by doctors and reformers, and there was even a new project designed by its then director in the plans for the Ciudad Lineal urbanization project<sup>24</sup>. However, all attempts fell through because of lack of funding and only some

- 
22. Reglamentos de la Inclusa, Colegio de la Paz, Casa de Maternidad y Asilo para los hijos de las cigarreras. Archivo Regional de la Comunidad de Madrid; sección Inclusa 1888.
  23. Two relevant works focused on that period are: Revuelta-Eugercios, B. A. Releasing mother's burden: Child Abandonment and Retrieval in the Foundling Hospital of Madrid, 1890-1935. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*. 2012; 42 (4): 645-672; and Revuelta Eugercios, Bárbara Ana. Abandoned and illegitimate, a double mortality penalty? Mortality of illegitimate infants in the foundling hospital of Madrid, La Inclusa (1890-1935). *History of the Family*, 2013; 18 (1): 44-67.
  24. Sección de Noticias. *El Imparcial*. 8 Feb 1875:3; Parte no oficial. *La Época*. 25 Mar 1875: 3; Edición de la tarde. *La Correspondencia de España*. 23 Jul 1882: 1; Noticias cortas. *La Correspondencia de España*. 25 Apr 1894: 2.

minor construction work was carried out to remedy the worse defects of the buildings<sup>25</sup>.

The problem of keeping children alive was caused by the chronic scarcity of wetnurses, discouraged from employment in La Inclusa by the systematic delay of payment. Unpaid wages of rural wetnurses often accumulated over several months leading to a crisis, when the institution settled its accounts. The most important moments, referred in the papers with announcement of payments were in 1876 and 1887<sup>26</sup>. Manuel Tolosa Latour, one of the doctors more heavily invested in the protection of the infancy, wrote in 1890 about the «herodiada» (referring to the biblical massacre of infants by Herod) suffered by foundlings placed in the countryside, highlighting the scant and discontinued payment wetnurses received<sup>27</sup>.

In 1898, the level of debt to the rural wetnurses from the nearby province of Ávila led them to present their case to the Provincial council (the debt by then comprised 27 months of wages), and the connection between unpaid wages and mortality of foundlings was first established. The newspaper *El Globo* reported that

«Mr. Peláez [the alderman in charge of overseeing La Inclusa in the meeting of the Provincial council] lamented that in La Inclusa 30 wetnurses had to nurse 120 children, deploring the fact that they were owed 30.000 pesetas (...) He said that from the 19<sup>th</sup> of the previous month, 68 infants had died in La Inclusa, although many of them had done so because they had infectious diseases...»<sup>28</sup>.

All periodicals soon picked up the news, horrified by the situation described as «a heinous crime committed against these children, doubly abandoned» by their parents and by the Provincial Council<sup>29</sup>. The President of the Provincial Council, Álvaro De Blas, hurriedly assured that the situation was under control, starting a pattern of denial of excess mortality

25. Note in *El Imparcial* around that time reproduced by Espina Pérez, Pedro. *Historia de la Inclusa de Madrid. Vista a través de los artículos y trabajos históricos, recopilación de textos y notas años 1400-2000*. Madrid: Defensor del Menor en la Comunidad de Madrid; 2005, p. 242.

26. Noticias personales. *La Correspondencia de España*. 6 May 1876;7; Senado. *El Siglo Futuro*. 2 Apr 1887: 1.

27. Tolosa Latour, Manuel. *La Herodiada*. *El Imparcial*. 11 Jul 1890: 3.

28. Diputación Provincial. *El Globo*. 11 Dec 1898: 2. All translations are from the author.

29. Niños muertos de hambre. *El Imparcial*. 14 Dic 1898: 2, re-printing of an article published by *El Progreso* (13 Dec 1898).

that would continue later on. However, he also ordered the first payments to the wetnurses, whose total debt was in excess of 760.000 pesetas, and promised to solve the situation shortly. As the employment opportunities in La Inclusa had been advertised in the papers, and news of payment had appeared, the dearth of wetnurses was temporarily solved<sup>30</sup>. The first phase of this incident ended just a couple of days after it started and, having triggered an immediate response by all parties involved, could be then immediately downplayed by all.

Unfortunately, the outstanding debt to the wetnurses was never really totally satisfied, and a second phase of this incident broke out on December 21, 1899. The Madrilenian newspaper *El Globo* published an article including mortality figures of La Inclusa in connection with the debt to the wetnurses. The newspaper's declared reason for this initiative was «to see if the publicity finally allowed such sad occurrences not to happen again». Mortality was said to be around 30% during the period 1894-1899, and explained by the scarcity of internal and external wetnurses<sup>31</sup>. Other papers rapidly followed suit, leading to a whirlwind of activity from the main parties involved, La Inclusa's doctors and director, and the President of the Provincial Council. Everyone looked for political responsibilities, leading to several meetings of the Provincial Council, the Provincial Council's Public Assistance Commission [*Comisión de Beneficencia de la Diputación Provincial*], Madrid's city council, and even contacts with the Home Office [*Ministerio de la Gobernación*].

However, the official response from all parties became very rapidly clear: denial. De Blas, the President of the Council, eluded any responsibility over the problem of unpaid wages, shifting the blame to the City Council: their overdue payments to the Provincial Council were the reason behind the debt to the wetnurses. However, even if there were some problems of payment or wetnurse scarcity, the fate of the foundlings was out of their hands

«Mortality in foundling hospitals is higher than in private homes for causes by all acknowledged; in order to check this fact, suffice it to say that from the 2,817 infants dead in the last six years, 1,672 died within a fortnight

---

30. Diputación Provincial. *El Globo*. 15 Dic 1898: 2; Notas provinciales. *La Correspondencia de España*. 17 Dic 1898: 1.

31. De La Inclusa. Lo que hay que remediar. *El Globo*, 21 Dic 1899: 1.

of admission and that most of the deaths occurred by lack of viability, athrepsia and infant or hereditary syphilis, which proves the wretched state in which infants arrive to the institution»<sup>32</sup>.

The Head Doctor of La Inclusa, Dr. González Álvarez, explained away the mortality problem similarly: first, he stated that a mortality rate of 30% was very reasonable for that type of institution, publishing some statistics in the press and concluding that «child mortality in La Inclusa is not exaggerated but actually lower than average»; second, as De Blas had said, the mortality of foundlings was clearly caused by the antecedents and vitality of abandoned infants at admission and, in fact, 80% of the mortality occurred among those artificially fed because they were too sick to be nursed by healthy wetnurses; and third, he blamed the good agricultural moment for the scarcity of wetnurses, discarding the problem of the unpaid wages as the reason<sup>33</sup>. Finally, the director of La Inclusa, Andrés Domarco, agreed with the doctor<sup>34</sup>. However, as a real problem, wetnurse scarcity, had indeed been acknowledged, some measures needed to be taken. Accordingly, an increase in monthly wages and tighter measures to control wetnurse recruiting agencies were announced<sup>35</sup>.

Against the backdrop of officials publicly downplaying the alarm over La Inclusa's situation, the daily press not only kept the issue alive, but liberal-leaning newspapers like *El País* and *El Heraldo de Madrid* led a full-fledged campaign against all the authorities responsible. Part of the campaign almost seemed to be just an effort to discredit the Board of Ladies and the Sisters of Charity, reporting hard to believe terrible tales of abuse and exploitation, probably fueled by their anti-clerical positions. Other papers, such as *El Imparcial*, *ABC* or *El Siglo Futuro*, also questioned the inefficacy of De Blas and the Provincial Council, but in a more moderate way.

While all responsible parties were actively minimizing the importance of the mortality problem and shifted or dissolved responsibilities, the situation escalated to a new level over Christmas<sup>36</sup>. On January 4, 1900, Senator Amalio Gimeno addressed the Minister of the Home Office, Eduardo Dato, in the Senate to inquire about the matter of La Inclusa and delivered

---

32. Carta del Presidente de la Diputación Provincial al Director de La Época. La Época. 29 Dic 1899: 1.

33. La Inclusa de Madrid. Lo que dice el doctor González Álvarez. El Globo. 31 Dic 1899: 1.

34. La Beneficencia oficial. El Siglo Futuro. 28 Dic 1899: 1.

35. Los niños de La Inclusa. El Imparcial. 28 Dic 1899: 3; Noticias Generales. La Época, 31 Dic 1899: 3.

36. Un matadero de niños. La Vanguardia. 29 Dic 1899: 7.

a speech about the importance of preventing infant mortality, proposing to the Government a piece of legislation to support the protection of infancy and the control of mercenary breastfeeding that was similar to the French *Roussel* Law. The Minister's answer explained the situation in La Inclusa as the product of «evils born out of old incidents and abuses», but assured the Senator that measures were being taken and that such a law proposal would indeed be supported<sup>37</sup>.

The national influence of La Inclusa extended also to the *Sociedad de Higiene* [Society for Hygiene], one of the medical societies heavily involved in the hygienic movement. Following the spark of the Senate's intervention, the Society took up the issue of creating the Spanish version of the *Roussel* law, connecting with its longstanding interest in infant mortality. Dr. Manuel Tolosa Latour headed a commission that succeeded, after two cabinet formations, in passing the first Spanish law for the protection of infancy [*Ley de Protección a la Infancia*] in 1904<sup>38</sup>.

Theoretically, this law should have affected the destinies of foundlings greatly, as it was mostly directed at regulating mercenary breastfeeding, demanding women to prove the fulfilment of a series of requirements to be able to be hired as wetnurses. By decreasing the hiring possibilities of women nursing, the law intended to curtail abandonment, but the regulation remained largely ineffective as private agencies, the largest employers of wetnurses, proved impossible to coerce into complying with it.

Back at the institution, the announcement in January of final payments to wetnurses officially ended this crisis, although the process of the actual payment still dragged on for some months. La Inclusa was portrayed as a well maintained institution, even a model for others, and the «problem of feeding» was effectively shifted from the number of wetnurses the institution was able to attract to the excess of deaths produced by the bottle-fed infants, where doctors had no part to play, as their health condition was «incompatible with life».

---

37. Diario de sesiones del Senado. 2 Jan 1900: 1794 and 4 Jan 1900: 1815-1825.

38. La Sociedad Española de Higiene. *El Globo*, 10 Jan 1900: 2; *Academias, Ateneos y Sociedades*. *La Época*, 10 Jan 1900: 3; *Cosas de Madrid*. *El Imparcial*, 18 Jan 1900:1. Perdiguero Gil, Enrique; Robles González, Elena. *La protección a la infancia y la Sociedad Española de Higiene*. In: Perdiguero Gil, Enrique, ed. *Salvad al niño. Estudios sobre la protección a la infancia en la Europa Mediterránea a comienzos del siglo XX*, Valencia: Guada Litografía, S.L.; 2004.

The rosy picture of La Inclusa painted by all responsible parties was soon to be contradicted by opinions coming from respectable quarters. Dr. Philip Hauser's account of La Inclusa in 1902 in his key description of Madrid under a medical-social perspective stated that:

«The hygienic conditions of the establishment are satisfactory (...) However, we consider the practical results as deficient and regrettable, despite the recent improvements included as, according to the official published statistics by Dr. González Álvarez, head of this establishment, the mortality is frightening, ranging from 63-92%, an annual average of 73,8%. We consider his computations very wrong...»<sup>39</sup>.

Doctor González's computations included in the denominator the population of foundlings placed in the countryside, so they were clearly underestimated. His criticisms extended also the Maternidad, whose lack of hygiene was ridiculized to the extreme<sup>40</sup>.

While the comments about *La Maternidad* lead to the disappearance of the most terrible features described by Hauser by 1909<sup>41</sup>, changes at La Inclusa's responded mainly to daily needs. In 1903, the Junta de Damas started the construction of a new building destined to house the weaned children, the *Asilo de San José*, in lands on the outskirts of the city donated to the institution<sup>42</sup> but additional changes only arose as result of the substitution of the medical head of the institution, Dr. Baldomero González Álvarez (who, by then, had been in charge of La Inclusa for more than 25 years), by Dr. Baltasar Hernández Briz in 1912. Small but important improvements were implemented in the care and processing of abandoned infants: controlled temperature and conditions of the room that connected to the wheel, introduction of incubators, compulsory tests on wetnurses to ensure that

---

39. Hauser, Phillip. Madrid bajo el punto de vista médico-social. Madrid: Editora Nacional; 1902, vol. I, p. 454-455.

40. Hauser, n. 39, p. 333

41. García del Moral, José. La Casa de Maternidad de Madrid. Santander: Imp. Lit. y Enc. Vda. de F. Fons; 1909.

42. Gómez Cano, M. Asilo de San José (Sucursal de la Inclusa). Pro Infancia. Boletín del Consejo Superior de protección a la infancia y represión de la mendicidad. 1911; Febrero; Monte-Cristo. La Casa de San José. El Imparcial. 9 Nov 1916.

they were not infected with tuberculosis or syphilis, forced nursing of newborns by their mothers for as long as they stayed, etc<sup>43</sup>.

However, the discourse had not changed yet: while parading the mortality of the children cared by wetnurses as among the best of the country, Dr. Hernández Briz highlighted that the 94.5% mortality rate of bottle-fed children was caused by their poor health at admission (congenital debility, syphilis, and genetic conditions inherited from parents)<sup>44</sup>. Contrary to other occasions, the publication of these details was not followed by any public stir. An isolated intervention by Senator José Roig y Bergadá in late 1916 in the upper chamber used data from the report, wondering about infant mortality but was answered two days later by the President of the Provincial Council, Antonio Díaz Agüero, with the same argument: illegitimacy, and sickly or dying conditions of the children of vice<sup>45</sup>.

### 3.2. *The discovery of «la Herodiada» in 1918 by the Medical Staff of the Provincial Public Assistance*

In 1915, two doctors, who would be ultimately responsible for the greatest changes in its history, started to serve at La Inclusa: Dr. Juan Antonio Alonso Muñoyerro and Dr. Juan Bravo Frias. They started a detailed study of the causes of infant death, through autopsies and more accurate mortality computations. Along with the whole Medical Staff of the Provincial Public Assistance branch [*El Cuerpo Médico de la Beneficencia Provincial*], they went public in June 1918 in a meeting set up with members of the Provincial Council. The following day, a statement about their terrible discoveries appeared in the press:

«Suffice to say that from the children who enter this establishment, more than half die in the first year of life (while it is 16% in the population). And from the children who are bottle-fed, all die. With these brutal figures, it is

43. Inclusa y Colegio de la Paz de Madrid. Pro Infancia. Boletín del Consejo Superior de protección a la infancia y represión de la mendicidad. 1915; Enero: 47.

44. Hernández Briz, Baltasar. La Inclusa y Colegio de la Paz de Madrid. Su estado actual y su porvenir. Madrid: Escuela Tipográfica Provincial; 1915, p. 5-6.

45. Diario de sesiones del Senado, 18 and 20 Nov 1916: 1600 and 1702-1704.

enough. They do not need commentary; but it is necessary, urgently, to find a fast an efficient solution»<sup>46</sup>.

This initiative was not only novel because it was the first time that one of the institution's responsible parties led the denunciation of the excess mortality, but also because their explanation, for the first time, placed the blame entirely not on the infants' background but on the hands on those responsible for caring for them: deficient feeding, general lack of hygiene, scarce and unequipped personnel, and lack of a proper location and equipment. Among the actions necessary to put an end to the situation, they listed: first, enforcing the upholding of the law for the protection of infancy to make mothers who delivered at the *Maternidad* remain at the foundling hospital to nurse their babies, preventing them from finding employment elsewhere as wetnurses; second, moving the institution to new premises, built for that purpose; and third, ensuring a proper treatment for the children by hiring adequately trained personnel, overseeing placement in the countryside, etc. However, they also listed actions which reflected the new ideas on the redeeming power of motherhood, giving a new meaning to the foundling hospital and to abandonment itself as a maternal shelter, which meant, among others, suppressing the wheel and implementing the search of paternity<sup>47</sup>.

While the President of the council, (at the time, acting President Arturo Soria y Hernández) agreed to look into the matter, a wave of press coverage followed this revelation. Once again, the more conservative newspapers, like *La Época* and *ABC*, maintained a concerned but moderate approach, while the more liberal and republican took a stand: *El País* launched another full-fledged anti-clerical campaign against the institution and *El Globo* positioned itself as the defender of the children of La Inclusa and «la Herodiada» that was being committed against them. The more reformist social medicine weekly publication *La Medicina Ibera* was quick to engage in the discussion while the officialist *El Siglo Médico* kept silent<sup>48</sup>.

---

46. Los niños que mueren en La Inclusa. Gravísima denuncia del Cuerpo médico de la Beneficencia provincial. *El Globo*. 15 Jun 1918: 1.

47. La mortalidad de los niños de La Inclusa. Sus causas y sus remedios. Madrid: Est. Tipográfico El Bola; 1918.

48. Roe, Carlos E. El problema de La Inclusa. *La Medicina Ibera*. 22 Jun 1918: 327. Las denuncias sobre la mortalidad en La Inclusa. *La Medicina Ibera*. 22 Jun 1918: 87-90.



While meetings at the Home Office, the Provincial Council and the Public Assistance Commission shortly followed these events, the same old strategy to deal with the problem, plain denial, appeared. First, Dr. González Álvarez challenged the data provided by the medical staff through a letter published in *ABC*. He offered his own lower mortality estimates, and defended that La Inclusa was in better shape than most similar institutions, which was explained by his former role as Head Doctor. As he had done in 1899, and Dr. Hernández Briz had repeated in 1914, he claimed that nothing could be done about those who had to be bottle-fed, who were:

«Newborns in poor conditions, preterm births, with growth problems, pathological hereditary traits, with syphilis, tuberculosis, degenerated; they are the scum of poverty, vice and alcoholism, in a sad combination!»<sup>49</sup>.

The medical staff replied in the same newspaper, explaining how González Álvarez figures under-estimated mortality and minimizing the importance of the condition at admission as its explanation. Dr. González Álvarez was criticized because he had resigned himself to keeping the situation as it was, while the means to improve it had already been available<sup>50</sup>. While this reply clearly disproved all Dr. González Álvarez's claims, distrust had been planted. Up to that moment, the acting President of the council had accepted the doctors' claims, but when the new President, Juan Fernández Rodríguez, entered office shortly after this exchange, he refused to believe the 100% mortality rate for those bottle-fed, accused the doctors of not producing any evidence and demanded it<sup>51</sup>.

By this time, the commotion created by the revelation of the mortality figures had again transcended Madrid politics or press<sup>52</sup>. On June 20, interventions by senators and congressmen raised the issue of the abandoned infants' mortality, debating the wheel. Once again, claims of conditions at admission were used to explain the level of mortality and the representatives' concerns were rapidly assuaged by the explanations of the measures being taken by the Minister of the Home Office, José Sánchez Guerra<sup>53</sup>.

49. González Álvarez, Baldomero. Carta del Doctor González Álvarez. *ABC* 21 Jun 1918: 14-15.

50. Un grave problema. *La Inclusa de Madrid*. El Cuerpo Médico de la Beneficencia Provincial contesta a la Carta del Dr. González Álvarez. *ABC*. 23 Jun 1918: 2-3.

51. Diputación Provincial. *El Globo*. 28 Jun 1918: 2; Diputación Provincial. *El Globo*. 14 Jul 1918: 2.

52. *La vida política*. *La Vanguardia*. 20 Jun 1918: 8.

53. Sesión del Senado de 20 de junio. *El Globo*. 21 Jun 1918: 2; Sesión del Senado de 20 de junio. *La Época*. 20 Jun 1918: 3; Sesión del Senado de 20 de junio (continuación). *El Globo*. 22 Jun 1918: 2; Sesión del Senado de 20 de junio. *La Época*. 21 Jun 1918: 2.

However, the impact of the scandal of *La Inclusa* went beyond that, casting doubts on the treatment of foundlings elsewhere in the nation. Accordingly, the Council for the Protection of Infancy and the Repression of Beggars [*Consejo Superior de Protección a la Infancia y Represión de la Mendicidad*], the highest institution in charge of the protection of infancy, that had stemmed from the 1908 Regulation of the law for the protection of infancy, issued a request to its Provincial Boards [*Juntas Provinciales de Protección a la Infancia*] to visit all provincial foundling hospitals and report on the conditions of foundlings<sup>54</sup>. These reports were published in the official journal, *Pro-Infantia* and, although the quality of the qualitative and quantitative information collected by the different boards varied greatly, it showed that *La Inclusa* was only part of a wider problem of wetnurse scarcity, extreme mortality among bottle-fed infants and others, and inadequate premises<sup>55</sup>.

Back in Madrilenian politics, even while doubts had been cast on the claims put forward by doctors (who were assuaged by the submission of a report soon after<sup>56</sup>), the Provincial Council started to address them. Several measures regarding mercenary breastfeeding were put into place: the wages of rural wetnurses were increased (from 15 to 25 pesetas for those nursing babies and from 7,5 to 10 pesetas for those in charge of weaned children<sup>57</sup>); wetnurse agencies were put under supervision; municipal authorities were entrusted with the task of identifying and recruiting women who could work as wetnurses for *La Inclusa*, etc<sup>58</sup>. After much discussion in favor of its disappearance, the wheel was maintained to allow anonymous abandonment, but measures to ensure the safety of children at abandonment were put in place (disinfection, permanent medical presence, etc.), together with the creation of an office to allow abandonment in anonymity. And, although

54. Uribe-Etxebarria Flores, Arantzazu. Aproximación a la situación de las Inclusas en las primeras décadas del siglo XX. In: Davila, P.; Naya, L. M., eds. *La infancia en la historia: espacios y representaciones*, Donosti: Erein; 2005, p. 185-204.

55. Junta de Protección a la Infancia de Madrid. *Pro Infantia*. Boletín del Consejo Superior de protección a la infancia y represión de la mendicidad. 1918; Septiembre: 1147-1156. Octubre: 1245-1267. Noviembre y Diciembre: 1346-1376. 1919; Enero y Febrero: 1931-1936; Marzo y Abril: 1141-1157.

56. La mortalidad de los niños de *La Inclusa*, n. 47, p. 10-20.

57. *La Herodiada de La Inclusa*. *El Globo*. 2 Jul 1918: 1-2; *La Herodiada de La Inclusa*. *El Globo*. 11 Jul 1918: 2.

58. Circular del Gobernador. *El Globo*. 30 Jun 1918: 1; Gobierno civil. *La Época*. 13 Jul 1918: 3; Nota del Gobierno civil. *El Globo*. 11 Jul 1918: 2.

the idea of the construction of new premises was still on hold, part of the internal wetnurses and sucklings of La Inclusa were transferred to the Asilo de San José in September<sup>59</sup>. There was still no sign of structural change in the institution.

In October, the President of the Provincial Council stated that things were improving, thanks to their efforts, following the monthly figures of admissions and deaths<sup>60</sup>. However, not that many things had changed, and it is quite likely that the improvement in mortality was just a consequence of the end of the summer mortality peak, as a steady decrease in mortality would not take place until later<sup>61</sup>.

### 3.3. *The definitive turning point: 1927*

While the crisis in 1918 ended up with small changes in the Inclusa, it also saw the exit of the two doctors that had been heavily involved in it, Dr. Alonso and Dr. Bravo. While separated from the institution, they continued to denounce the foundlings' high mortality through scientific papers, conferences, and other academic ventures. In 1921, they were accepted again as full members of the Provincial Public Assistance's Medical Staff, and destined to La Inclusa in 1923<sup>62</sup>.

The doctors maintained their engagement in the effort to publicize their campaign with more public appearances but with little impact, although they were probably behind some small changes in the period (modifications in Asilo de San José, new works in the Maternidad, etc.). In 1925 there was an attempt of revitalizing the foundling question by the newspaper *El Heraldo de Madrid*, with a general article about the employment conditions of wetnurses, but there was no follow-up<sup>63</sup>. It was not until 1927 when the last press scandal over La Inclusa's mortality brought about the changes

59. Reformas en La Inclusa. La Época. 22 Jul 1918: 3; Las reformas en La Inclusa. La Época. 9 Sep 1918: 4; Reformas en la Inclusa. Supresión del torno. El Imparcial. 9 Sep 1918: 4.

60. Notas provinciales. La Correspondencia de España. 18 Oct 1918: 3.

61. Revuelta Eugercios, n. 23, p. 10-11.

62. Alonso Muñozerro, J.A. La transformación de las Inclusas en España. La realidad de la transformación de la de Madrid, reproduced in Espina Pérez, n. 25, p. 530-573; Alonso Muñozerro, Juan Antonio. El Hospital infantil como centro sanitario social. Hospitalización del niño abandonado. Actas X Congreso Nacional de Pediatría. Madrid: 1960, p. 3-21.

63. Bolis, R. La Inclusa de Madrid y los niños abandonados. El Heraldo de Madrid. 23 Feb 1925: 5.

claimed for decades. The triggering event did not come from the press itself but from the behavior of Provincial Council.

In February 1927, Dr. Bravo gave a talk at the National School of Childcare [*Escuela Nacional de Puericultura*] discussing foundling hospitals and mentioning the familiar figures of 50% general mortality and 100% mortality in the bottle-feeding department. The Madrilenian press only reported a perfunctory review of the speech<sup>64</sup>, but the Provincial Council jumped quickly to discredit him: the day after the talk, the alderman of La Inclusa gave an interview to *El Heraldo de Madrid* newspaper stating:

«I think that Dr. Bravo and Dr. Muñozerro have been and still are unfortunately wrong, their judgment clouded, undoubtedly, by the zeal and enthusiasm they want to bring to their mission. They may have a more or less accurate impression on what is going on in the Inclusa but never the complete statistics that allow them to state, as they have, that the mortality is 50%...»<sup>65</sup>.

He then went on discussing statistics and explaining mortality by the children's lack of vitality at admission. When Bravo was also given the opportunity to reply, he clarified that the figures from his talk were general but that his own estimations did show a 45% for the previous year and took the opportunity to present his vision about foundlings:

«Most of them are not the children of vice, as it is said. They are the children of love, heirs to healthy, young and strong parents, and there is no reason for them to die, according to their perfect health conditions when they entered the institution»<sup>66</sup>.

While *El Heraldo de Madrid*, as *El Globo* had done ten years earlier, embarked on a quest to support Bravo's plea to improve La Inclusa, the Provincial Council started a campaign to elude responsibilities and, again, challenged the credibility of the doctors, Dr. Bravo in this case. The situation reached beyond Madrid's limits again<sup>67</sup>. A committee was organized to look into the matter, and several meetings involving the same parties as in 1918 took place: the Provincial Council, the Commission for Provincial Public

64. En torno a las Inclusas. Una conferencia técnica. La Voz. 14 Feb 1927: 8.

65. ¿Es cierto que en las Inclusas la mortalidad es aterradora? El Heraldo de Madrid. 15 Feb 1927: 1.

66. El doctor Bravo contesta a la Diputación. El Heraldo. 17 Feb 1927: 1.

67. Declaraciones del Director de La Inclusa. La Vanguardia. 18 Feb 1927: 19.

Assistance, and the Home Office. This time, even a visit from the Home Office minister (Severiano Martínez Anido) to the institution was organized.

According to Alonso Muñozerro's writings in later years, the Minister's visit had been initially prepared by the Provincial Council to show him a rosy picture of the institution and discredit the doctors. However, when he met them, he was immediately convinced of the severity of the mortality problem after being shown by the doctors the autopsy records: 757 deaths out of 1,200-1,300 admissions. At the end of his visit, while stating that the institution was in good shape, the Minister also accepted the fairness of the proposals put forward by the doctors and that they should be carried out<sup>68</sup>.

As in previous occasions, although the doctors' ideas had already been accepted, the backlash against them had yet to run its course. Dr. Bravo was given an administrative sanction for a minor moral offence, «exaggerating mortality», later withdrawn after outraged criticisms flooded from the newspapers<sup>69</sup>. In any case, things started to be done. One of the claims already present in 1918 in the doctors' agenda, and again discussed was the need to keep mothers delivering in the *Maternidad* nursing their children in La Inclusa for some time. The law for the protection of infants had yielded no results in this front, so a new law was proposed that would force women to nurse their children for two months after delivery. Once again a particular problem at La Inclusa had taken the question of foundlings to the highest political spheres: the Council for the Protection of Infancy and the Repression of Beggars took the initiative and elevated it to the Government, which finally made it into a national law<sup>70</sup>.

In local politics, the long-time demanded project of moving La Inclusa to newly built facilities started. The transformation had two parts: a first phase consisted on moving all remaining children from La Inclusa and the Colegio de la Paz, still at the old premises in Embajadores street to Asilo

---

68. Esta mañana visitó la Inclusa el ministro de la Gobernación. El Heraldo de Madrid. 11 Mar 1927: 1; Visita de las autoridades. La Voz. 11 Mar 1927: 3. Alonso Muñozerro, n. 62, p. 532.

69. La mortalidad en La Inclusa. Dictamen de la Comisión nombrada para investigar responsabilidades. La Voz. 7 Apr 1927: 8; Contra la diputación, no; contra La Inclusa, sí. El Heraldo de Madrid. 8 Apr 1927: 1; Diputación Provincial. La Voz. 17 Oct 1927: 12; Vamos a conseguir la desaparición de la Inclusa. El Heraldo de Madrid. 12 May 12 1927: 1.

70. El presidente de la Diputación contesta a nuestra campaña. El Heraldo de Madrid. 28 Feb 1927: 1; Del régimen de La Inclusa. La Voz. 8 Mar 1927: 6; El régimen de las Inclusas. Reunión en Gobernación. Visita a La Inclusa de Madrid. Pro Infancia. Boletín del Consejo Superior de protección a la infancia y represión de la mendicidad; 1927; Enero: 8-9.

de San José. In a second phase, the children would be finally transferred to new premises built for that purpose in the lands surrounding the *Asilo*. This institution underwent several reforms to house the remaining inhabitants of La Inclusa and Colegio de la Paz and the official move took place in December 1927. The girls from Colegio de la Paz stayed there only until the building designed to house them was finished in 1929. The change of location came together with a change in name, to Provincial Institute of Childcare [*Instituto Provincial de Puericultura, IPP*], that would finally try to change public perception of foundlings and to capture both the new welfare use of the institution and compassionate view of single mothers and foundlings<sup>71</sup>. In 1929, the wheel and the possibility of anonymous abandonment disappeared forever, being replaced by an admissions office.

Plans for the new buildings had been approved early in 1928, but the construction dragged on until 1931, when the sections already finished started to be occupied. The official inauguration did not take place until October 23, 1933. At that time, the building could house 1,014 children, 122 wetnurses, and 47 nuns, including rooms for doctor, dispensaries, surgery, etc. New medical equipment, X-rays, installation of a milk depot, incubators, and labs were added. Illustrated features of the IPP appeared in several newspaper portraying doctors, labs, and hygiene as symbols of the new era for the institution<sup>72</sup>.

While the plans for the new Inclusa succeeded, the construction of a new maternity hospital in the surrounding lands to the IPP, which was supplementary, was placed on hold in 1931 for lack of funding, and was not re-launched until 1934. The events of the Civil War and the post-war penury prevented its conclusion until 1956<sup>73</sup>. In La Inclusa, Dr. Muñozerro was dismissed when the war broke out and, soon after, many children were sent to Valencia to avoid Madrid's siege<sup>74</sup>.

---

71. Diputación Provincial. La Época. 5 Nov 1927: 3; Diputación Provincial. El Sol. 27 Oct 1928: 2; El traslado de la antigua Inclusa. El Siglo Futuro. 1 Dec 1928: 3.

72. Alonso Muñozerro, n. 62, p. 6-8. Silveira Armesto, S. En la Inclusa: la pura alegría y el dulce vivir de unos cientos de chiquitines —hijos de nadie y de todos— de almas abiertas a infinitos horizontes. ABC. 24 Oct 1933: 6.

73. El proyecto sobre la Casa de maternidad. ABC. 28 Feb 1931: 36.

74. García Sánchez, María Isabel. La Inclusa de Madrid durante la guerra civil (1936-1939) [master thesis]. Universidad Complutense de Madrid; 1994.

#### 4. Final remarks

*La Inclusa de Madrid* experienced its greatest transformation in the period 1890-1930 responding to new attitudes towards infant abandonment and foundling mortality. Around the turn of the century, there was a traditional view of foundlings as the children of vice and of women who abandoned infants as immoral (alcoholics, prostitutes or both). Doctors still saw them as already compromised by their birth, and their mortality as largely unavoidable. In such context, the first popular outcries against their conditions were rendered largely ineffectual.

However, by mid-1910s the new model of women as mother, largely stemming from the medical emphasis on breastfeeding and motherhood, had started to change the consideration of single women and foundlings. Instead of vanishing them from society, motherhood could redeem single mothers, and their infants should not die in such proportions.

The doctors in *La Inclusa* in 1917 under the light of powerful evidence of high mortality took action, and those actions, amplified by the press, yielded the first changes and the institution was removed to new premises. Their full claims would not, however, be met until the shift towards this new vision of redeemable single women and foundlings became widespread. By 1927, this motherhood-based model was largely accepted and even famous doctors, like Gregorio Marañón, were writing about it. The final step in the process would be the beginning of the construction of a new medicalized centre for the care of women and infants, which became the new Institute of Provincial Childcare.

In February 1930, an all too common alarming headline, «What happens in *La Inclusa*?» appeared once again in the press, wondering about the excess mortality of the district where *La Inclusa* was located and rapidly echoed by other papers<sup>75</sup>. The following day, in an interview with a newspaper, Muñoyerro answered:

«Nothing, there is nothing. Nothing at all [he said when the reported approached, guessing the reason for the visit] Look (...), there is a huge

---

75. ¿Qué pasa en *La Inclusa*? *La Voz*, 18 Feb 1930: 8. P Las defunciones de niños y la consiguiente alarma. *El Heraldo de Madrid*. 19 Feb 1930: 1. Las defunciones en *La Inclusa*. *El Siglo Futuro*. 19 Feb 1930: 3.

different between La Inclusa as it was in Embajadores Street and this one, this is infinitely better than that; however, it is still a foundling hospital»<sup>76</sup>.

And he was right: the great change had been achieved.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my advisor Diego Ramiro-Farinas for his help during this whole process, the two anonymous reviewers who contributed with helpful comments to improve the paper and to P.C. Grant for the language revision. ■

---

76. Recio, M. Una charla con el doctor Muñozerro. La Voz. 20 Feb 1930: 4.