Respectable and Disreputable Women Mechanisms of Relief for and Oppression of Women in Spain in the Early Modern Period

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Abstract
One of the defining characteristics of the working classes during the Old Regime was poverty, and the main victims were women, especially those who "vivían sobre sí" [eighteenth century Spanish expression meaning to fend for or support oneself]. Indeed, the percentage of female-headed households in cities which were considered "impoverished" was higher than that of male-headed households. Furthermore, women not only had to cope with hardship and destitution but they also expected to scrupulously observe the prevailing moral doctrine. If they were considered respectable, they were eligible to receive relief from public and private charitable institutions, but should they transgress the moral standards of the day, they would find that there was no room for tolerance

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1. Introduction

In the Old Regime dominated by a patriarchal society, the role that each sex was expected to perform was clearly defined. Men were dominant in all areas of life and women were required to adapt their behaviour to the rules that men formulated. Irrespective of the reasons and or needs that might have impelled women to disobedience, if they...
transgressed they became part of the group of misfits\(^3\) whose behaviour needed correcting and whose spirit required moral
guidance in order to maintain the stability so necessary for all social order.

In recent decades, research on the female world has shed light on the key role women have played in the economic,
family, social and cultural arenas, a responsibility that went far beyond that which was theoretically assigned to them in
a society in which all spheres of power were controlled and legitimised by men. This paper will focus firstly on the women
who adhered to the social rules governing female behaviour, and more especially on those who enjoyed legal personality,
meaning that they were mistresses of their own destiny. Such disciplined behaviour endowed them with access to the
possibility of receiving relief from the various forms of charity which had emerged during the Old Regime, whether
religious, political or private in nature. The second focus will concern an analysis of the performance of power against
women who transgressed these precepts; those who departed from the role assigned them by the social order. In this case,
any "relief" came in the form of repressive mechanisms aimed at correcting and governing their behaviour.

2. Women who "vivían sobre sí": quantification and livelihoods.

Before examining the various mechanisms of relief aimed at women, it will be useful to briefly discuss the number of
households headed by women, in which they were not only mistresses of their own destiny but also of the fate of all the
household's members, and to look at how they lived and what financial means they had at their disposal. The spatial scope
of this study encompassed three cities located in what is now the Autonomous Region of Castile and Leon, namely
Zamora, Leon and Astorga\(^4\). It should be borne in mind that women residents were only visible in fiscal or population
censuses when they were named as being the head of a household and the trade they practiced was recorded. One of the
main sources for elucidating these questions is the Catastro of Ensenada, a large-scale census carried out in Spain in the
mid-eighteenth century.

Women in these societies only acquired legal personality when they had neither a husband nor a legal guardian.
However, the lack of such figures meant that by the mid-eighteenth century, a considerable number of women were
considered heads of a household in the cities of Leon, Zamora and Astorga. At that time, women were responsible for
approximately one in five households occupied by lay people - in León, they headed 23.3% of lay households\(^5\), in Zamora,
20.7% and in Astorga, where the figure was slightly lower, 18.3%. Thanks to the conservation of a series of registers of
residents for the latter city, it is possible to determine whether there was any relationship between the assumption of this
responsibility and the various events of the eighteenth century. Thus, in the early days of the eighteenth century, a

\(^1\) Historically, women have belonged to what Carlé has termed as peripheral social groups, along with the poor. However, Segura Graiño has stated
that provided they observed the social norms, women should not be included among the marginalised, even if they shared some common ground
with these, such as not being able to "take centre stage in society." *Carlé, M. C. (1988). La sociedad hispana medieval. Grupos periféricos: las

\(^2\) a period in which the lay population accounted for less than 1,400 residents in the city of Leon, almost 2,000 in Zamora and around 700 in Astorga.

\(^3\) This figure occupies an intermediate position between the percentage obtained for the municipality of Alcaraz, in Albacete, which stood at 20%,
and that established for Avilés, in Asturias, where 25.8% of households were headed by a woman. García González, F. (1998). *La sierra de Alcaraz
Asturias del siglo XVII. Oviedo: Real Instituto de Estudios Asturianos.\n
\(^4\) a period in which the lay population accounted for less than 1,400 residents in the city of Leon, almost 2,000 in Zamora and around 700 in Astorga.

\(^5\) This figure occupies an intermediate position between the percentage obtained for the municipality of Alcaraz, in Albacete, which stood at 20%,
particularly difficult time to live due to the effects of the economic crisis of the late seventeenth century and the armed conflict triggered by the War of Succession, 18% of all households in the city were headed by women, whereas in the times of political and economic stability ushered in during the mid-eighteenth century, there was a marked decline in this figure, as noted above, to 18.3% of all lay households. This evidence suggests that circumstantial difficulties constituted a determining factor in the position of women as heads of households.

The public and private behaviour of women, as defined in the Old Regime by moralists and legislators, revolved around the home; however, the economic needs of their families obliged women to go beyond this space, and irrespective of the importance of their reproductive tasks, their work outside the home represented a major boost for the family economy. Despite playing an active role in the construction of history, these women were, in turn, hidden by history itself. Thus, although the surviving documentation provides an insight, to some extent, into the work performed by those who "vivían sobre sí", the work carried out by women who were wives, sisters or daughters remains shrouded in mystery.

Female-headed households were characterised by three main distinguishing features: widowhood, poverty and loneliness. Indeed, the death of a spouse was the principal reason why women became the head of a household; approximately nine out of ten of these women were widows. Being unmarried came a considerable distance behind, accounting for 11.9% of women in Leon and 6.1% of women in Zamora. When the poverty experienced by women is compared to that faced by men, it can be seen that of the 96 households in Zamora categorised as impoverished, 71.9% were headed by women, whilst in Leon this proportion ranged from just over two-thirds to three-quarters, depending on whether the figures consulted refer to officially recognised paupers or to households considered impoverished but not officially recognised as such, which placed them in an even more precarious situation since they could not benefit from institutional relief. The same vulnerability was also apparent in rural and semi-urban areas; for example, in the town of Sahagun, where in 1752, 17.2% of the women who headed households were considered paupers, whereas only 1% of men were classified as such.

Focusing exclusively on female-headed households, almost one in four of these women lacked sufficient economic means to cope with the responsibility they shouldered. Such was the case for 26.9% of such women in Leon, for 21% in Zamora and 17.9% in Astorga. This problem affected households governed by unmarried women and by widows equally; 27.1% of widows and 26.3% of single women in Leon were considered poor, whilst in Zamora the figures were 20% and 22%, respectively. To a large extent, the survival of these women was dependent on the world of charity and social relief, and their dependence on these institutions increased as they grew older.

In light of the data obtained from Catastro of Ensenada, the mean age of poor women in the city of Zamora responsible for the fortunes of a home was 55.1 years, five years older than those in the same position who had economic means, and almost identical to that of women in similar circumstances living in a semi-urban location in Leon, namely in Ponferrada, who presented a mean age of 55.3. Hidden behind these figures were a number of women in their sixties, who did not have a bright future in the field of employment. In some cases, the personal declarations recorded in the Catastro indicate the resources that these women turned to in order to survive. The most widespread strategy, of course, was to resort to begging, although not all women found themselves in the same situation in this regard, since a small group of about a dozen women were guaranteed relief from the bishopric or one or another convent; the rest, however, were obliged to search for charity through the streets of the city, going from door to door. In addition to begging, some would occasionally find casual work. For example, Maria Gonzalez made her living from "carrying 4 bags of coal on market day and her

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7 Historically, the female sex has constituted one of society's peripheral groups. (Carlé, M.C.,1988)
8 However, despite the considerable number of unmarried women who headed their own households, they accounted for far less of the population than in some Asturian cities. Menéndez González, A. (2006). El barranco de las asturianas. Mujer y sociedad en el Antiguo Régimen. Oviedo: KRK Ediciones.
9 The percentage of poor women who headed a household was lower than that found in the nearby city of Valladolid, where they accounted for 86.79% of such households. Maza Zorrilla, E. (1987). Pobreza y asistencia social en España, siglos XVI al XX: aproximación histórica. Valladolid: Universidad de Valladolid.
10 "When a poor person was officially recognised as being a pauper, he or she became entitled to certain economic and social rights and acquired an almost privileged position, with more rights and resources than the rest of the lower classes". Carasa Soto, P. (1984). Crisis y transformaciones de la beneficencia del Antiguo Régimen. Aproximación al sistema hospitalario de la Rioja entre 1750 y 1907, Cuadernos de Investigación Historia, 10, 7-26.
spindle"; meanwhile, María Garrote, whose work on the spinning wheel did not lift her out of the category of poor, was "kept alive by a miserable crust doled out by the nuns of Santiago". In order to help boost their economic situation and meet a fraction of their needs, some women even rented out part of their home, as was the case of María Domínguez, who "attends to guests and rents a room in her house, for which they pay 11 reales [a Spanish coin] a month, which supports her for half the year and the rest comes from begging".

Among the women who were not officially recognised as poor in the fiscal census carried out in the mid-eighteenth century, a considerable number were living near the poverty threshold. They usually worked in occupations related to the secondary and tertiary sectors, within which they practiced a wide range of occupations\(^\text{11}\), many of them marginal and for which no previous training or qualifications were required. In addition to commercial activities, women living in the smaller towns had the possibility of working in agriculture, an activity which was crucial for the survival of women in rural areas.

Nonetheless, 56% of women were employed in two occupations that could really be considered as an extension of domestic work, namely bread making and textiles, in the latter sector as spinners, weavers or seamstresses. Meanwhile, another important occupation for women in the tertiary sector was that of small-scale vendor\(^\text{12}\), in which women managed small businesses primarily related to the sale of food, some of whom specialised in a particular product, for example, eggs, fruit or sardines. In the city of Leon, where such women did not generally enjoy social approbation, they were described as "the people who do most good and most damage in the cities and towns". Branded as troublemakers and swindlers, some even described them as "villainous women", and in 1798, one of the aldermen attributed the shortage of fish for sale on the city's market to a ruse these women employed to push up their prices. Laundry work and domestic service constituted two other important occupations for women in tertiary sector. In Zamora, washerwomen earned an average wage of 300 reales, but there were considerable socioeconomic differences of a horizontal nature, since the mode was a third of that amount.

Besides this group, which formed the majority of women responsible for households, whose lives were marked by poverty and necessity, there was another comprising women who ran more substantial businesses, in jewellery, textiles or hostelry.


As previously noted, many of the women who "vivían sobre sí" required the support of charitable institutions combined with begging in order to survive. During the Early Modern Period, many called for the intervention of the Crown to defend and protect the disadvantaged, but with no success. This responsibility therefore continued to be shouldered by Church and by individuals who, inspired by Christian principles, contributed to alleviating the situation. Such relief encompassed various actions, including the foundation of hospitals, donations and the promotion of charitable works. All contained a dual motivation, on the one hand the purely charitable impulse, aimed at remedying the plight of the needy, and on the other, personal interest, whereby the benefactor expected to benefit his or her soul. In the case of charitable works intended to provide for orphans, however, the motivation for such foundations encompassed other components which went beyond charity or piety, such as political or moralistic reasons. In accordance with these premises, there were only two routes open to women if they wished to enjoy social respect\(^\text{13}\); the convent or marriage. Thus, to provide them with access to one of those states was to secure them a place in society, because given the widespread association between economic poverty and moral poverty or loss of honesty\(^\text{14}\) and public respect, it was thought that destitute and vulnerable women

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\(^{11}\) The kind of work carried out by women in the city of Zamora was practically identical to that observed on a more general scale. Vid. Casquero Fernández, J. A. (2003). Zamora según el catastro del marqués de la Ensenada, 1750-1759", Florián de Ocampo, 20, 303-341.


\(^{13}\) To be female and also poor, single and resident in the city was to fulfil all the criteria for violating the rigid sexual morality informed by the discourse of the time. Rial García, S. (1995).

\(^{14}\) It goes without saying that such preconceptions were not consistent with the social reality. However, some women, as well as some men, did
would end up morally degraded, especially those who did not have a father figure, in other words someone to protect their honour15.

One of these relief mechanisms aimed at helping poor women, and perhaps the most important of all those implemented during the Old Regime, was that of the charitable works intended to provide a dowry for young women. However, it should be borne in mind that the purpose of such relief went beyond charity. In the moralistic discourses of the time, aimed at social control through control of consciences, the single woman was a dangerous element who posed a threat to the patriarchal order16. The strategy considered most suitable for maintaining the desired order was to propel men17 and women toward marriage18. This killed two birds with one stone. On the one hand, sexuality was contained19 within the permitted sphere, reproduction, whilst on the other hand, marriage embedded women firmly within a family institution, an outstanding force for socialisation which from the bottom up, interacted with the Crown to preserve social stability20.

The starting point for this was the female dowry, defended by some and attacked by others21. However, receipt of this kind of relief did not depend solely on the wealth of the candidate or, in some cases, her kinship with the founder; it was fundamental that the women in question had retained her honour and that her family was also honourable. For example, the regulations governing the dowries granted by the charitable works board in Leon instituted by Leonor de Quiñones specified that the recipient must be a legitimate daughter born in wedlock22.

Another type of relief available to poor women who led a respectable life was alms. Records in the city of Leon show that wives and even daughters of former employees of the council body requested alms from this institution. Although these were exceptional cases, they should nevertheless not be dismissed due to the unquestionable relief the recipients become marginalised as a result of poverty. The need therefore arose to distinguish between those were really deserving of charity and those who were happy to live off alms and shun work, thus not contributing to economic development. Since the dawn of the Early Modern Period, writers and politicians alike suggested that the latter should be sent to the workhouse, and the women to orphanages or the so-called houses of penance. Carbonell, M. (1990). Las mujeres pobres en el setecientos. Historia social, 8, 123-34; Pérez Baltasar, M. D. (1997). La marginación femenina en el lecho de los Austrias. In López-Cordón M.V. y Carbonell M. (Eds.). Historia de las mujeres e historia del matrimonio. Murcia: Universidad. For Portugal, see Lopes, M.A. (2005). Repressao de comportamento femininos numa comunidades de mulhecesualmente perdida no Recolhimento da Misericórdia de Coimbra (1702-1743). Revista Portuguesa de Historia, T. XXXVII, 189-229.
obtained. The beneficiaries included Florentina Herrera, who received a pension of one real a day between 1792 and 1798, following authorisation from the Council of Castile. This woman, unmarried and with physical disabilities, was granted the stipend “in consideration of services rendered to the city by her father”, who had worked as a teacher for twenty years. Meanwhile, a few years earlier, Manuela Morán and Manuela Roldán were also awarded a stipend of 100 ducats a year each, in 1761 and 1781 respectively, as widows of doctors in the town, again following prior authorisation from the Royal Council. The first had been the wife of Dr. Andres Meire, who had held a post in León for twenty four years, and the second was the widow of Dr. Manuel Martínez. Other actions that benefited women carried out by this institution were related to the treatment of certain diseases, such as ringworm, associated with the precarious living conditions of the working classes. Thus, in September 1711, the council body gave 100 reales from its own funds to a woman named María García to “cure ringworm in twelve poor children”, and in 1649, it gave 28 reales to “a poor girl with ringworm” to pay for her treatment. Other institutions also gave relief to the poor such as, for example, the convent of San Marcos in León, where “besides food, men receive one farthing every other day, and women and children half of that amount”, and the bishopric, which provided meals for the needy on certain days, or the cathedral chapter.

Meanwhile, those who worked as servants were occasionally rewarded by their former employers for their services through more or less generous bequests in the latter’s wills. The sometimes hard working relationship between servant and master did not imply the absence of affectionate ties between the two. For example, in 1708, María Tascón ceded in joint ownership two cows that had been bequeathed to her in the will of “her mistress, Mariana Alonso”, the widow of a city scribe. This legacy endowed María with the ability to embark on a speculative investment business that provided her with the income that she had hitherto lacked. Even more generous was María Javiera Vegadoira, who in the late eighteenth century bequeathed all her property to her servant Manuela de Castro. This affection for their servants was often forged over years of close contact. Such would have been the case of Juana Fernández de Rebollo, who had a business, and Francisca de la Cruz, who worked in her service for 30 years.

In difficult times, when these women were victims of a disease, help was sometimes available in the hospitals of the cities. From the admission registers recording the patients admitted to the hospital of San Antonio, in the city of León, and those of San Juan or the Cinco Llagas in Astorga, it can be seen that the number women admitted was very similar to that of men, if not higher. In the city of León, 55.8% of patients were women versus 44.2% of men, and at the hospital of the Cinco Llagas, which was smaller, the proportion was even higher, with women accounting for almost two-thirds of total admissions. The greater use that such women made of these charitable institutions can be explained by the feminisation of poverty; however, it should also be borne in mind that they were probably more willing to make use of public charitable institutions. It was not only the largest hospitals which had wards equipped to care for poor women; such was also the case of other, more modest establishments, such as the one maintained by the brotherhood of San Martin in León. A series of very detailed records from the hospital of San Antonio shed light on the type of women admitted to this institution: their mean age was 34.2 years old, although 41.7% were aged between 35 and over 80, and most - 44.6% - were casual labourers. Such employment was probably related to temporary urban work where the women did not live in and earn a very low wage; a considerable number of self-employed women who appeared in the Catastro of Ensenada without a recognised occupation would have been in this situation. "Beggar women" also accounted for a significant number of admissions, 21.6%. Some were from the city and others were from elsewhere, reflecting the well-known attraction that urban centres, as the home of religious institutions, exerted on the needy. At 18.4%, women in domestic service also accounted for a significant number of admissions. With the exception of a small group of women who owned small businesses and may possibly have enjoyed a somewhat more well-to-do life, the rest worked in low-skilled

24 A.H.M.L. C. 76.
28 Admission registers record the age of 472 women admitted to the hospital of San Antonio between 1782 and 1854. A.C.L. (Archive of the Cathedral of León). Libros de entradas de enfermos en el Hospital de San Antonio Abad.
occupations and many of them probably combined their work with begging. Examples of such women would be those who worked as water carriers, hosiers, shepherdesses, chestnut sellers, washerwomen, cake sellers and clothing retailers.

However, women were not only expected to behave in accordance with the strict moral codes which governed society, but also to observe and apply them in their daily lives. In the preaching mission conducted by the Jesuit Tirso González in the mid-seventeenth century, he criticised the visits that women in Leon made to their friends' houses, due to the problems that these could cause the family economy. To remedy the situation, he decided to ask their husbands to reprimand such customs, which he believed prevented them from paying their debts; in consequence, the women from Leon decided not to attend his sermon\(^{29}\). However, he did have an immediate success with his censorship of their style of dressing, which he considered rather shameless\(^{30}\).

In 1714, the bishop of the city of Leon suggested founding a school for respectable, and in this case, noble women\(^{31}\). It was to be located in the house occupied by the magistrates\(^{32}\) and funded by the pensions and tithes which had been confiscated by the King from the Admiral and Constable of Castile, and which the bishop received; or with the income obtained from levies and taxes. However, this project failed to materialise.

4. "Disreputable women": mechanisms of repression.

There was no room in the society of the Old Regime for tolerance whenever social norms were transgressed. The creation of hospices and poorhouses, intended as places of imprisonment and labour, was the fruit of reformist thought in the eighteenth century, and an attempt to eradicate poverty and idleness and control unbridled sexuality\(^{33}\). These actions, encouraged by the Crown, were framed within the pursuit of social peace and economic development. However, the proposals of the Bourbon reformers were not original but rather had their roots in the arguments propounded two centuries earlier by authors such as Pérez Herrera\(^{34}\) or Miguel Giginta\(^{35}\), who had conceived of very similar solutions to these problems as those now taken up during the Enlightenment, and who had seen the rapid materialisation of their ideas in the foundation of correctional institutions in several Spanish cities\(^{36}\) such as Toledo, Barcelona, Zaragoza and Palma de

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\(^{29}\) "There is great disorder in Leon among the ladies, occasioned by the fact that, if one of them has to make a visit, she takes along many others to accompany her; and the one who is to receive her, must have all her friends with her to receive them; so that any visit involves all the ladies in the city, and they are thus continually walking about outside the home. The consequences of this unsuitable behaviour are daughters and servants being left unsupervised; and they often do not return until ten at night. The expenditure occasioned for this reason is excessive, since it is the obligation of the lady receiving the visit to provide chocolate and refreshments to all the ladies. Husbands deplore this disorder, but do not dare to stop the abuse. I have waited until the Sunday of the first general communion to rebuke it. I did so with consideration, and maintaining all due respect for the ladies. Nonetheless, the majority were very offended and conspired not to come again to hear me, and so on Monday, when the preaching mission moved on to San Marcelo, not a single lady attended. Some however rejoiced that I had touched on the matter. Last Sunday, when everyone came, I again briefly touched on the matter, charging the husbands to take the matter in hand and redress this evil; because if in order not to renege on these obligations, they failed to pay their debts, they would have no excuse before God; because these expenses are futile and superfluous, and it is their duty to eradicate them in order to pay their debts". Reyero, E. (1913).Misiones del P. Tirso González de Santalla, 1665-1686. Santiago: Editorial Compostelana.

\(^{30}\) "Women have remodelled their clothes, and much improvement can be seen in the garments that had low cut necklines; because some have made their jerkin necklines higher; and all those who came to receive Communion in the general communion who had not raised their jerkin necklines, had covered themselves with a piece of cloth. There was not one lady who, the night following the sermon in which I spoke of this matter, was not working to make her jerkin neckline higher. Let us now hope that any new jerkins which shall be made, shall not be cut so low, but shall be more decent". Reyero, E. (1913).

\(^{31}\) "Neither in this capital nor in all the diocese is there, nor has there ever been, any school whatsoever devoted to this purpose under any name as there are elsewhere for orphaned girls. And although convents for calced orders have usually reared some girls, this has been more for religious purposes than for their education. And if from this some benefit has emerged for the girls, it has also been a source of relaxation and diversion in the religious life since they do not belong to the institution". A.H.N. Sección Consejos. Cámara de Castilla. Sala de Gobierno, Leg. 7294.

\(^{32}\) "Because it is large, spacious, well ventilated and overlooking the countryside, and has a courtyard in the centre for the leisure and honest entertainment that the girls would be permitted and a stream that runs through it could easily be directed into this house, and for all these reasons it would be of great benefit to consider it and although the function of this house is presently that of a public prison this could easily be separated as it is very distant from what is the accommodation". And for the granary and other store rooms, the comedy theatre or one of the two houses that the city council has in the city could be used. A.H.N. Sección Consejos. Cámara de Castilla. Sala de Gobierno, Leg. 7294.

\(^{33}\) For more on the arguments of Early Modern Period thinkers in relation to the idle and almsgiving, see Maza Zorrilla, E. (1987).


\(^{36}\) In the early years of the Early Modern Period, and even before, institutions destined for imprisonment and labour were also constructed further
The hospices were designed to absorb unemployed and potentially dangerous workers and redirect them towards the productive system. Thus, the objective of these repressive institutions was to regenerate inmates during their period of imprisonment by providing vocational training and strict moral instruction, so that once thus rehabilitated, they could be fully and safely reintegrated into society. It was within this context that projects arose to create a poorhouse in Astorga, which would accommodate men, women and children, as well as other institutions in Zamora and León aimed exclusively at correcting female behaviour.

Under the auspices of the Enlightenment Bishop, Antonio Jorge Galván, two institutions intended for the social control of women were opened in the city of Zamora, as well as other establishments the priority of which was to correct what was considered unseemly behaviour, for example the so-called "Sala Oscura" [Dark Room] in the hospital of Sotelo and the "Casa Galera" [women's prison]. The former, which he founded in 1768, provided care for pregnant women and offered them the possibility of remaining anonymous throughout the birthing process. To ensure this, the women could use a reserved entrance door, were allowed to cover their faces throughout their entire stay and, of course, were guaranteed the discretion of all who attended the birth. Until 1798 when a hospice was founded Zamora, all children born in the institution were baptised in the cathedral and then sent to the home for foundlings in Salamanca. The cost of maintaining these facilities was initially met with part of the hospital's income, and shortly afterwards the Crown assigned an annual income of 600 ducats. In the early years of the 1780s, the institution's regulations were amended and, among other measures, the admission of women who were repeat offenders was prohibited. The maternity ward offered an additional advantage to women giving birth, because besides the physical and spiritual care bestowed on their children, they too received health care at a time when the figures for death in childbirth were relatively high. The registers recording the births that occurred in the hospital between 1769 and 1800 have been preserved, although with some small gaps; however, they obviously contain no data that indicate the characteristics of the women giving birth in the maternity ward. Average annual births in that period amounted to 19.2, and peaked in the 1780s, when the figure reached 21.6. In the closing years of the century, a hospice was opened in Zamora, which could have led to less use of these facilities, since women would be even less exposed to the world if they gave birth to their children in the privacy of the home and then abandoned them in the institution, but this did not happen.

A similar home was founded in the Real Villa de El Ferrol, under the auspices of the Brotherhood of Charity. This city was much more heavily populated than the cities of Leon and Zamora, and contained 25,000 inhabitants in 1787. The home gave anonymous refuge to young unmarried women who had become pregnant after maintaining improper relationships. In February 1790, the council complained of the "excessive charity" of the institution, which it believed was responsible for a loosening of morals among the youth, and decided to reduce the allowance it assigned to the

38 In neither case is it possible to determine the proportion of women who came from elsewhere, but given the relationship that existed between soldiers and prostitution, a significant percentage of the women admitted or imprisoned in these institutions would undoubtedly have come from outside the city. Martín Márquez, A. (1994). La Casa Galera y fábrica de paños de Zamora: ejemplo de beneficencia eclesiástica en el siglo XVIII. Anuario del Instituto de Estudios Zamoranos "Florían Ocampo", 11, 481-508.
39 Among the reasons that the bishop proffered to justify the founding of this institution was the practice of infanticide and the social consequences that women would suffer if it became widely known that they were guilty of such "infamy": "they lost the possibility of being wed and even of working in domestic service, and were thrown out onto the streets because of an unfortunate necessity". Crespo J. and De La Mata J.C. (2009). La historia hospitalaria de la Vía de la Plata. Salamanca: Rotary Club.
40 Between 1700 and 1723, 1.17% of the children admitted to the home for foundlings in Salamanca came from Zamora. This percentage increased to 5.2% between 1794 and 1825, although most arrived in the first four years of this period, because in 1798, a hospice was opened Zamora. More significant was the number of women from Zamora who passed through the Salamanca institution in search of children to breastfeed. During the first quarter of the century, they represented just over 24%, a figure which dropped to 7.8% towards the end of the century. In both cases, it was the district of Sayago that contributed most women. Fernández, M. (1988). Expósitos en Salamanca a comienzos del siglo XVIII. Salamanca: Diputación de Salamanca; Torrubia, E. (2004). Marginación y pobreza: expósitos en Salamanca (1794-1825). Salamanca: Diputación de Salamanca.
41 Motivated in some cases because the administrator was "in his land." A.D.Z. Leg. 3.
42 Data referring to 1780, 1788 and 1789 have been omitted as records are missing for some of the months.
43 "Exercising in this hospital the excessive charity of taking in various pregnant young women from elsewhere so that they can give birth there and
The "casa galera", or women's prison, in Zamora opened its doors in the last third of the eighteenth century, under ecclesiastical patronage and in the context of a proliferation of this type of institution in the Kingdom of Castile, for example in Santiago de Compostela, Asturias, Salamanca and Mondoñedo. Bishop Galvan decided to establish these facilities after remarking on the high number of women who roamed the city and whose presence was related to the large number of soldiers quartered in the garrison. It could hold about fifty prisoners. A few years after opening its doors, and following a Royal Decree of 1768 which ruled that the inmates should be transferred to the Royal Factory of San Fernando, the prelate requested that the building they had occupied be converted into a "casa de recogidas" [correctional institution for women]. He paid from his own pocket for all the machinery, looms and other tools necessary to set up a textile factory, which would provide work for "loose women" and other poor people in society. His idea was that a portion be cared for during labour so that according to certain out-of-court reports there have been five of them at the same time without having given the slightest indication to the magistrate in order for the appropriate remedy to be taken, thus giving license to these people to blithely continue with their excesses and scandals.

"In this case it would be idle to take in such women, nor would anyone want to go to the hospital because rather than being a means to avoid the infamy and judicial measures that would ensue should their crime become public knowledge, once learning that none of this would be achieved, and it would instead be the surest way to draw attention to their excess, they would abandon themselves to other grave evils of religion and humanity as painful experience has verified".

The "casa galera" in Salamanca was founded in 1757 by Bishop José Zorrilla de San Martín, and had the capacity to accommodate 24 women and received an annual income of 2,000 ducats. It was incorporated into the hospice in 1793. The opening of the "casa galera" in Asturias in 1776 marked the completion of a project that had a long history behind it. The Council of Castile had initially received a request for the house in 1738, but it did not eventually materialise until the 1770s. Meanwhile, work on the "casa galera" in Santiago was finally concluded in 1770, seventeen years after the Archbishop of the city had taken this initiative. Villar y Macías, M. (1887). Historia de Salamanca. Vol. III. Salamanca: Imprenta Francisco Núñez Izquierdo; Menéndez González, A. (2006); Rial García, S. (2004). Solas y pobres: las mujeres de las ciudades de Galicia ante la marginalidad y la prostitución. Sémitas, 16, 301-331. From the eighteenth century onwards, it became widespread practice in Europe to imprison the poor in institutions, which received a variety of different names. Pérez, M.D. (1985). Origen, de los recogimientos de mujeres. Cuadernos de Historia Moderna y Contemporánea, VI, 13-23; Mejide, M. L. (1992). Mendicidad, vagancia y prostitución en la España del siglo XVIII. La casa galera y los departamentos de corrección de mujeres. Madrid: Universidad Complutense; Oliver, P. (1998). Genealogía de la "corrigenda": mujeres encarceladas en Pamplona (Siglos XVI-XIX). Huarte de San Juan. Geografía e Historia, 5, 7-42; Valverde, L. (1992). Entre la corrección y el castigo: La casa galera de Pamplona en los siglos XIX y XIX. Príncipe de Viana, 16, 567-578. The institutions in Spain created to control women considered to present unseemly behaviour were known by the name of "galeras"; more information on the history of these institutions for female imprisonment, Vid. Pérez De Herrera, C. (1975). Amparo de pobres. Madrid: Espasa-Calpe (Título IV); Barbeito, I. (1991). Cárceles y mujeres en el siglo XVII. Madrid: Castalia. This study contains the work of Sister Magdalena de San Jerónimo.

The first were those created in Madrid and Valladolid. Philip III ordered the creation of similar institutions in other cities such as Zaragoza, Barcelona, Valencia and Granada. Amigo Vázquez, L. (2011). Valladolid sede de la Justicia. Los alcaldes del crimen durante el Antiguo Régimen. Cronica Nova, 37. 41-68.


After Pope Leo X in Rome founded a home in the early sixteenth century for the imprisonment and reform of women, these institutions became very popular. Negredo del Cerro, F., Vaquerín Aparicio, D., Gil Ruiz, S. and García Hernán, D. (2004). Los regulares y la vida en el siglo. In Martínez Ruiz, E. (Dir.). El Peso de la Iglesia: Cuatro Siglos de órdenes Religiosas en España. Madrid: ACTAS. Although the cases discussed here did not involve incarceration in a religious institution, others were attached to convents and entailed a completely enclosed regime. On the other hand, the "casas galeras" did not initially imprison inmates separately according to the reason for which they were admitted. Prostitutes, delinquents and beggars were held in the same place, which could lead to further corruption. To remedy this, two types of incarceration were organised; the "casas galeras", designed to house criminals, and the "casas de recogidas" for imprisoning those who did not live in accordance with the morals of the time. Vid. Martínez Galindo, G. (2002).
of the profits generated by manufacture could be used to cover the costs of the "Sala Oscura" and other necessities at the hospital of Sotelo, but it seems that this plan was never implemented. In 1798, at the request of the magistrate of the city, the women who had been imprisoned in the "casa galera" were transferred to the hospice, to a specially converted ward which was separate from the rest of the building. However, by the eighteenth century, women in the "casas galeras" were no longer subject to the strict discipline that their founder, Sister Magdalena de San Jerónimo, had proposed in the early seventeenth century.

As regards the "casa de recogidas" in the city of León, intended as a place for the segregation and punishment of women, the project emerged in the early eighties of the eighteenth century, and was presented by the mayor of León to the president of the Royal Chancery of Valladolid. It was an institution for the detention and social rehabilitation of "corrupt women from that city." It was located on the second floor of the Royal Prison and had the capacity, as reported in 1784, to accommodate up to twelve inmates - ten places were rapidly occupied. The Leon council body invested "between five and six thousand reales" in equipping the site, which had been raised through charity by the mayor and an alderman. Once the proposal had received approval, the person sponsoring the institution was charged with drawing up the regulations which would govern the house. Drafting was completed in early 1782, and the result was a set of rules extending to nine chapters that were supplemented by a further four detailing working hours, meal times, and the type of food that would be offered as well as the "spiritual nourishment" that would be provided. This was submitted to the Council of Castile, which in turn sent it to the Royal Economic Society of Friends of the Country in Madrid. The reason for this referral was a new report, also written by the mayor and addressed to the Council prosecutor, in which he suggested the desirability of responsibility for managing the establishment being assumed by the newly formed Royal Society of Madrid.

The institution would be controlled by a Board responsible for economic affairs and government. This Board would therefore be responsible for administering the money received by the centre, whether obtained from alms or from the sale of the items inmates would be obliged to make, mainly textiles, and for managing operational costs; it would also be responsible for ensuring the maintenance and provision of facilities. The board of governors would be composed of almost a dozen people, including the mayor of the city, who would be the president, an alderman, the representative of the trustees, the parish priest of San Marcelo, since the proposed "casa de recogidas" would be located in this parish, the eldest ombudsman, the person responsible for the income from the "rentas de los Millones" [a tax on spices, wine, vinegar, oil, meat, soap and tallow candles], at least one representative of the order of knights and whoever was deemed appropriate from among the merchants and farmers. The first four would constitute the steering committee, and were to meet weekly, whilst the plenary sessions were to take place once a month.

The institution would not be supported economically by a fixed income, but was to be financed through any alms received and the profits generated by selling the inmates' needlework. It was hoped to supplement this income by appropriating, one day a week, the donations that had been collected for the food which was given every day to the poor; and, if all this was not sufficient, to resort to requests for charitable donations, for which two members of the board would

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52 More women were incarcerated in poorhouses than in the "galeras". They were used to punish women beggars, petty criminals and also orphaned and homeless women. Almeda, E. (2006). Mujeres y cárceres; pasado y presente de las cárceres femeninas E. España. La función social de la política penitenciaria, CongrésPenitenciari Internacional. Barcelona.
53 It seems that the project was well received because, as the recipients of the report indicated, they had collected 9,511 reales, of which 7,345 had been used to construct and equip the facilities.
54 The Royal Economic Society of Friends of the Country in Leon was created in the early eighties of the eighteenth century. González Martínez, R. (1981). La Real Sociedad Económica de Amigos del Pías de León. León; Caja de Ahorros.
56 They considered that the regulations were "worthy of the highest praise, for the zeal with which they protect the good of the nation, while avoiding at the same time the scandals and bad consequences that idleness entails, considering that the most appropriate means to avoid this is the incarceration of corrupt women, giving them at the same time useful occupation".

be responsible. They planned to stand at the gates of the city on market days, since they were confident that they would be able to collect donations from people transporting firewood and coal from the villages to the capital. Similarly, they also planned to send a person to all the villages under the jurisdiction of Leon, in order to collect linen, in the hope that farmers would contribute a portion of the harvest and donate other goods. To ensure the success of their fund-raising activities, they intended to notify all parish priests responsible for these locations, so that these would encourage their parishioners to support the proposed project. The money collected would be deposited in a chest with three keys, one to be held by the alderman, another by the parish priest of San Marcelo, and the third would be given to the representative of the merchants or farmers.

The commission of the Royal Economic Society of Friends of the Country in Madrid, appointed to evaluate the project in Leon, considered that its viability could not be based exclusively on the collection of alms, because "although there is zeal at the beginning, it often cools down afterwards". They proposed the creation of a Monte Pio [widows and orphans fund], with an endowment of between fifty and sixty thousand reales which could be provided from city funds or from funds collected from intestate ecclesiastical assets. Furthermore, since the mayor’s proposal was for the "casa de recogidas" to be governed by the Economic Society in Leon, the commission felt that the governing board described in the regulations would be unnecessary. The commission suggested that it be replaced by four people, two of whom would be responsible for economic affairs, a "trustworthy" person to act as the custodian of the Monte Pío fund and a bookkeeper; and another two responsible for management, who in turn would appoint a person to be responsible for supervising the work and behaviour of the women inmates, whose punishments in the case of misconduct would be imposed by the Mayor.

The purpose of the "casa de recogida" would be to incarcerate "those women most abandoned to scandal and idleness." In anticipation of the need to confine more women than there were places available, it was established that in the case of women who had parents that did not live far from the city, these would be advised to come and collect them, and warned that if their daughter relapsed into unseemly behaviour she would be incarcerated. In this event, the parents would furthermore be expected to bear the costs of their daughter’s maintenance, whilst any profits generated by the sale of the work she carried out during her imprisonment would be retained by the institution. However, in the case of poor young women from the city or surroundings, they would be directly incarcerated for the length of time that the Board considered necessary to correct their behaviour.

Besides women considered scandalous, it was also planned to incarcerate orphan girls of an age which might dispose them towards a disreputable lifestyle or whose parents would take them out begging "thus exposing them to vices incompatible with Christian morality". For these exceptional cases, of young women who were incarcerated in order to safeguard their honour and instil virtuous behaviour, the institution had a separate room available. The young women were provided with a Christian education and vocational training, in line with - in this case very basic - utilitarian principles, equipping them for employment in domestic service\textsuperscript{57}. They could leave the institution when work as a servant became available for them in a house, but only with the permission and under the supervision of the board.

They hoped to redeem the women thus incarcerated by means of long working hours, during which they would be occupied in needlework, and a meticulous spiritual education. From the 1st of April until the 30th of September, they would work in the workshop from six in the morning until eleven thirty and then again from two in the afternoon until seven. They would have a short break at eight, to eat breakfast\textsuperscript{58}, and another at half past eleven to eat lunch. The rest of the year they had breakfast at half past seven in the morning, then worked from eight to twelve, when lunch was served, from one to four and from seven to half past eight. As regards their Christian education, they had to confess four times a year, on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, Christmas day, the feast of St. Peter and one other day chosen by the parish priest, say the rosary together every day and receive doctrine, demonstrating their progress in this once a month to all members of the board.

The members of the Madrid commission made several suggestions concerning these questions. They proposed the creation of a school, governed by the same system as that of the school they supervised in the house for the destitute in

\textsuperscript{57} More specifically, the measures to be implemented were defined thus: to exercise "all care for their education and the Christian Doctrine and Holy fear of God, teaching them needlework and other tasks."

\textsuperscript{58} For breakfast they were given some soup, whilst for lunch and dinner it was stipulated that each inmate should receive one and a half pounds of bread and half a pound of meat per day, all cooked together in a common pot and accompanied by vegetables and bacon.
Inmates should be trained in the use of the spinning wheel\textsuperscript{59}, for the manufacture of flax and hemp yarn, hosiery and ribbons. Such an education could be used to benefit not only the women inmates but also the poor women living in the city who had no employment. In the case of the inmates, they had to work at least eight to ten hours a day and meet the stipulated daily goals, under pain of punishment. However, to encourage the women to learn, the commission proposed giving them a quarter of what they earned from their work, and once they had completed their training they should be allowed to return home and continue working from there. The raw materials they needed would be provided for from the Monte Pio fund, their work would be collected and they would be paid for it.

This "casa de recogidas" was in operation for a short period of time, but no documents have been found which provide any information about its later evolution. It is possible that a lack of income was the cause that eventually derailed the project. Neither is there any evidence that the Royal Economic Society in Leon assumed responsibility for its any information about its later evolution. It is possible that a lack of income was the cause that eventually derailed the project. Neither is there any evidence that the Royal Economic Society in Leon assumed responsibility for its

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