CHAPTER SIX

FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF CARE RECEIVERS

Introduction

The previous chapters dealt primarily with initiators and organisers of care, or Tronto’s first and second phase. This chapter concentrates on the fourth phase of care, involving the reaction and response from those receiving care. It tells the story of a girl, who, just like Roosje, lived with the Poor Sisters of The Divine Child. Care receivers are often overlooked in historiography and the archives hardly contain any traces of them. This is not the case, however, for the newly established home The Providence in Amsterdam in 1852. One of the girls who lived there from the beginning, Evelina van der Lugt, left a personal document covering the period of 1852–1856. Because her mother died and her father was ill, she and her sister had to go to a children’s home. The asylum had only opened the month before their arrival. Forty years later she recorded her memories of these first years. She told the history of the home as she had experienced it at the time, from the perspective of a receiver of sisterly care.

Evelina’s recollections, written down as a kind of diary, drew a picture of daily life in the small home, with all the ups and downs a child experienced. The adults in the newly established asylum were having difficulties in getting care organised and in making ends meet. They lived as a poor but close family, i.e. hand to mouth, not knowing where the next meal was coming from. However, this homeliness was soon put under pressure because of the arrival of a large number of children and sisters. Evelina was a Protestant, but at the instigation of the asylum board she was ‘converted’ to Catholicism. She was glad to have become part of her new environment, but her father was not that content. Evelina felt so close to the women and men who took care of her, that she entered the congregation when she was an adult. The memories of Evelina are a long-term response to care by a former care receiver, or care leaver. Tronto’s fourth phase of care only captures a short-term response that takes place during the care process; I suggest conceptualising a long-term response to care as well, one that becomes
apparent many years after the care practice has ended. To enrich the picture, several other care leavers of the Poor Sisters will be quoted as well. Their stories give some insight in the kind of life an asylum child could expect.

_Evelina’s Memoirs_

How does the perspective of a care receiver appear, if we draw on her own words? (The chapter about Roosje Vonk presented Roosje’s view as perceived by her son.) An exceptional personal document about the first children’s home in Amsterdam has been saved in the archive of the Poor Sisters. It concerns the story of a girl who stayed there from the very beginning. Several weeks after the foundation on 5 August 1852, Evelina (sometimes called Evelyne) arrived, together with her younger sister. Evelina would never leave the community again. Eleven years later, on 25 April 1863, she became a sister herself, and received