

gime and the dawn of political liberalism, handled himself with the same aplomb in sweeping syntheses as in his archival work. He is an example of a historian with an equal capacity for research as for divulgation, with comparable efficiency in a local monograph and a synthesis that encompasses an entire country (his), a state (Spain) or even all of Western Europe. Proof of this is his contribution to the *Història dels Països Catalans* (1980), in which he wrote everything on the region of Valencia from the 18th to 20th centuries, and through this project I am personally able to attest to how gratifying it was to work with him.

Other subsequent examples of sweeping syntheses were his book *Agricultura y crecimiento económico en la Europa occidental moderna* (1992) and the one entitled *El Siglo de las Luces* (2007), an outstanding social history of the culture where he examines the culture of both the elites and the lower classes in the Enlightenment and

18th-century superstitious in Spain. His most remarkable recent contributions were to the history of the population of the city of Valencia and its outlying area, the Horta, in the history of this city, which he published in 2009.

Manuel Ardit was a translator of classical texts, including several by James Casey and Robert Darnton, as well as the biography of the historian Marc Bloch written by Carole Fink. Regarding tributes to the masters of the previous generation, we should recall that in 2002 he compiled a variety of works by Emili Giralt under the title of *Empresaris, propietaris i vinyaters: 50 anys de recerca històrica*.

Faithful to the language that unites Catalonia and the region of Valencia, a historian bowing to an open concept of the Catalan-speaking lands, and influenced in his earliest works by Joan Fuster, Manuel Ardit was a figure respected by all, a researcher who remained active and published until the end, shortly before a cruel illness deprived us of his aid and his friendship.

## Gregori M. Estrada (1918-2015)\*



The 18th of March 2015 marked the death of Father Gregori M. Estrada i Gamisans, who was born in Manresa on the 28th of April 1918. During his early years, he lived in Mas Rossinyol in the town of Monistrol de Calders, and he continued to spend his summers there until his parents decided to send him to the Boys' Choir of Montserrat, where he

spent six years, from September 1926 until September 1932. That was the era of Abbot Antoni M. Marcet, when there were serious conflicts between the monastery and the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, which accused the Abbot of being a Catalanist. The dictatorship wanted to remove him from the monastery, but a new era dawned with the proclamation of the Second Republic in April 1931, which ended tragically in July 1936 with the outbreak of the Civil War. The war could have had much more serious consequences for Montserrat had it not kept up such outstanding relations with the authorities of the Generalitat, which protected the monastery and helped the monks escape, some of them seeking refuge abroad.

Francesc Estrada – this was his given name – had two outstanding teachers in the Boys' Choir who cultivated his musical talent and set him on a pathway which he would never abandon. They were Father Àngel Roda-

milans, then the prefect of the Boys' Choir, who would later be assassinated in Sabadell in 1936, and Father Anselm Ferrer, the director of the school, with whom Father Gregori would be close with until the former's death in 1969. He also received musical training from other monks who worked with the Boys' Choir, including Father Maur Fàbregas (musical theory), Father Isidor Civil (violin), Father Isidor Fonoll (prefect after Àngel Rodamilans) and Father Plàcid Feliu (also the prefect during the last few weeks of Estrada's stint in the Boys' Choir).

In 1932, when he stopped being an acolyte, Francesc Estrada entered the school for aspiring monks in Montserrat, and in July 1933 he went from being a student to a novice at the monastery, where he took the monastic name of Gregori Maria. On the 6th of August the following year, he took his vows as a monk on Montserrat, and he immediately began to further his music studies, which he had never abandoned. In 1935 and 1936, he embarked upon organ studies at the Conservatory of Barcelona's Liceu Opera House under the direction of Father Josep Muset.

In early July 1936, he was temporarily sent for health reasons to the residence that Montserrat had in Andorra at that time, and there he was taken by surprise by the military uprising on the 17th to 19th of the same month and the revolution which sprang up all over Catalonia. He and other Catalans immediately travelled to Turin, from which, through Genoa and Roma, he joined Abbot Marcet and a group of monks from Montserrat at the monastery of Subiaco. The entourage from Montserrat had had to abandon Barcelona, and along with other young monks – accompanied by Emilià Riu, the prefect of the juniors of Montserrat – they took refuge in the

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German Beuron Archabbey (Hohenzollern), where they were fraternally welcomed. In academic year 1936-1937, he studied philosophy at Maria Llach Abbey (Rhineland), which was also Benedictine, where all the monks from the Beuron congregation gathered, and he returned to Beuron during academic years 1937-1939 to study theology. When World War II broke out, he moved to Rome, and from 1939 to 1940 he took a theology course at the Benedictine university of Saint Anselm. In the meantime, in November 1939 he returned to the monastery of Subiaco, where Abbot Marcet welcomed him into the official monastic profession on the 13th of November and conferred on him four minor orders which prepared him for the priesthood. In 1940, while still in Rome, he was ordained the deputy deacon of the archbasilica of Saint John Lateran.

In 1941, when the academic year ended early because of Italy's entry into the war, Estrada went from Rome to Barcelona in hydroplane and rejoined Montserrat. There he was immediately ordained presbyter and began to serve as the organist, an activity that he kept up until early this century, when his progressive deafness started to compromise his ability. Meanwhile, he continued his music studies: along with his peer, Father Ireneu Segarra – with whom he worked hard, even though they often had quite disparate opinions on musical issues – he studied harmony and counterpoint in Barcelona with the masters Josep Barberà (1941-1947) and Cristòfor Taltabull (1947-1950). Without ever ceasing to hold positions of responsibility within the community, in 1947 he spent a month in France's Solesmes Abbey, along with Father David Pujol, to work on the Gregorian music texts from Montserrat, and in 1950 he spent a few months in Paris and Hendaye, where he studied the fugue with Charles Koechlin and organ with André Marchal. From 1968 to 2002, he was also the director of the monks' choir at Montserrat and offered a class on Gregorian chant to the clerics of Montserrat to train the young monks, myself among them for several years.

He always worked intensely as an organist, as a promoter of organ-building and bell smelting – in Montserrat and elsewhere as well – and as a composer of religious music. Particularly worth highlighting is his important contribution to Catalan liturgical song after Vatican II, when Latin was replaced by the vernacular languages in both mass and divine office, which is so important to Benedictine monasteries and convents. This contribution was not limited to the composition of new melodies; in-

stead, it has repercussions around the entire country through the *Trobades d'Animadors de Cant per a la Litúrgia* (Gatherings of Promoters of Songs for the Liturgy) which he started in 1970 and are still held today, following the spirit of the man who founded them.

Along with these intense religious and pastoral activities, he also performed a study of the ancient musicians of the Boys' Choir of Montserrat, the most important result of which was the publication of the works of Father Miquel López and Father Joan Cererols in the "Mestres de l'Escolania de Montserrat" collection. For many years, he tried to find a new interpretation of the 14th-century songs and dances in the *Llibre Vermell* of Montserrat, from which he published some advances and promoted performances in conjunction with the Boys' Choir of Montserrat and other groups in 1978 and 1979, in Montserrat, Barcelona, France, Germany and Rubí. Shortly before his death, he had put the finishing touches on the definitive text of the book he was preparing on this topic, which will no doubt spark controversies among musicologists.

Given this background, it should come as no surprise that on the 17th of January 1974 he participated in the founding session of the *Societat Catalana de Musicologia* (Catalan Musicology Society), a branch of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans of which he became the second president, a position he occupied until 1991. During those years, he published an article and several obituaries in the society's newsletter, which were joined by other studies he had published in Catalonia and abroad, mostly briefs written in a lay style. On the 18th of December 1992, he was elected a full member of the History-Archaeology Section of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans with the profession of musicologist, but a year later he became an emeritus member and never played a prominent role in the Institute's undertakings, although he did keenly follow its activities and always scrupulously voted by post whenever needed.

Serious by nature and somewhat rigid in his convictions, he was at once affable and helpful, a fervent patriot and indefatigable worker. Late in his life he was gravely diminished, not only because of his deafness, as mentioned above, but also because his health problems required him to use a wheelchair and kept him away from community life. However, he never lost his good humour and worked until the last day of his life. He will always remain in the memories of those of us who have known him well and esteemed him.