

Alexandre Olivar (1919-2018)*



On the 1st of October 2018, Father Alexandre Oliver i Daydi passed away on Montserrat. He was a corresponding member of the History-Archaeology Section of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans since 1973 and the founder and president of the Societat Catalana d'Estudis Litúrgics, an affiliate of the institute, since 1978. Born on the

1st of February 1919, he had

just turned 99 years old and was looking forward to his 100th birthday. However, a fall led him to break his femur, which was followed by an operation from which he was unable to recover, depriving him of the chance to celebrate this centennial by just four months. Fortunately, however, he was in time to receive a doctorate *honoris causa* from the Ateneu Universitari Sant Pacià on Montserrat on the 18th of November 2017, an honour which culminated his lifelong study, research and teaching.

He had entered the monastery of Montserrat at a very young age, in July 1934, and there he took his temporary vows in August 1935, at which time the abbot Antoni M. Marcet changed his baptismal name, Lluís, to Alexandre, as was customary at the time. He kept this name his entire life and always used it to sign his extensive body of work, which he wrote in the fields of bibliology, the history of the liturgy and patristics. Between 1936 and 1939, he had to further his studies abroad because the Civil War prevented him from continuing his monastic life on Montserrat. He had the great fortune to live successively in Maria Laach Abbey in Germany and Maredsous Abbey in Belgium, where he not only did he have outstanding professors, but he also furthered his knowledge of German and French, two languages which opened up a world that he never abandoned, alongside the Latin he had studied on Montserrat.

As soon as the Civil War was over, he was able to return to his monastery, where he took his official vows in August 1940, was ordained a priest in August 1942 and received his theology license from the Universidad de Salamanca in 1945.

From 1948 to 1953, he was the director of the Library of Montserrat, where he would later serve as the conservator of the manuscript section for many years. An enthusiast of all kinds of books and an avid reader, he also dove into studying the incunables conserved on Montserrat, two complementary catalogues of which he published (1955 and 1990), and he catalogued the Western manuscripts under his stewardship in four batches (1969, 1977, 1991

and 2008), which were joined by a good number of monographic works. In this same field, he published the catalogue of the incunables of the Episcopal Library of Vic (2000) in conjunction with another monk from Montserrat, F. Xavier Altés.

A professor of Latin, methodology, Church history, liturgy and patristics at the theological study centre of Montserrat, he had many disciples – including myself – who enjoyed his classes, which were always permeated with humour and bonhomie, and occasionally stanced by exams which were sometimes excessively demanding or even arbitrary, and learned a great deal from the example he set and his extensive knowledge.

His teaching was accompanied by constant work in the same fields. His liturgical knowledge took him to Rome during Vatican II, where he spent a time as the secretary of the Cardinal from Montserrat, Anselm M. Albareda. In Barcelona, he was the vice-president of the inter-diocesan commission for the version of the liturgical texts, a job which had been preceded by his role as the secretary general of the 2nd Liturgical Congress of Montserrat in 1965. During that time, I was able to help him in countless ways with the organisation and especially in the publication of four large volumes of the minutes, which were a kind of preparation for the job he soon took at the monastery's press, Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat.

In the field of the history of the liturgy, he prepared important editions of the Sacramentary books of Vic (1953) and Ripoll (1964), and since 1994 he was a member of the drafting committee of the *Literaturbericht* of the *Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft* at Maria Laach Abbey, a journal in which for years he published long reviews of publications on liturgical topics written in Spain. As mentioned above, he, Miquel dels S. Gros and José Janini founded the Societat Catalana d'Estudis Litúrgics, of which he was the honorary president at the time. Within this society, he spearheaded the creation of the journal *Miscel·lània litúrgica catalana* and the "Biblioteca litúrgica catalana", which have garnered a great deal of prestige because of the multiple contributions they have made to his area of expertise. Since 1954, he had also been a corresponding member of the Herwegen-Institut.

Finally, in the field of patristics, in addition to being a founding member of the Association Internationale des Études Patristiques (1967), he also spent countless hours on two very specific topics: the history of ancient Christian preaching, about which he published a thick tome in 1991, and the critical edition of the sermons of *Saint Peter Chrysologus*, in three volumes of the *Series latina* of the "Corpus Christianorum" (1975, 1981 and 1982). He made this latter work available to the Catalan public in conjunction with Father Jaume Fàbregas i Baqué in six volumes published by the Fundació Bernat Metge (1985-2003). Previously, he had laid the groundwork for this publication in the seminal work *Los sermones de San Pedro Crisólogo. Estudio crítico* (1962), which was issued, just

* Text prepared by JOSEP MASSOT (Institut d'Estudis Catalans). Photograph: Photographic Archive Collection of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans.

like the majority of his books, in the “Scripta et Documenta” collection issued by Montserrat.

For all of this incredible work, truly the “*labora* of the Benedictines”, he earned entry into the Acadèmia de Bones Lletres de Barcelona, where in April 1983 he delivered the speech entitled *Els auditoris cristians antics*, with Dr Frederic Udina i Martorell responding on behalf of the Academy. Thereafter, he regularly attended the Academy sessions and often delivered speeches, contributed to the Academy’s newsletter and responded to the admission speeches of several new scholars.

Eva Serra i Puig (Barcelona 1942-2018)*



Eva Serra i Puig, one of the major touchstones in Catalan historiography in the past four decades, passed away on the 3rd of July 2018. Born in Barcelona in 1942, Eva was the eldest daughter of Josep de Calasañç Serra i Ràfols (Mahon 1900-Barcelona 1971) and Isabel Puig i Pardellà (Vilanova i la Geltrú 1920-Barcelona 1991), her mother the descendant of a

humble fishing family from the coastal village of El Garraf. She first studied in the municipal school in the Guinardó neighbourhood along with the children of the civil servants working in the Barcelona Provincial Council. Popularly known as “Font del cuento”, this school was co-ed unusual at the time. Afterward, Eva and her sister Blanca studied for their baccalaureates at the Institut Verdaguier in Barcelona.

Her childhood and early adulthood were marked by the atmosphere of moral and material repression and penury in the post-war years. Her own family experienced this repression and domestic exile because of the purging and professional eschewment of her father, one of the most prominent disciples of Pere Bosch i Gimpera. In those harsh years experienced within a family with republican and Catalanist values, Eva Serra also learned about the tenacious struggle of the group of intellectuals and activists in her father’s circle to instigate the cultural and national restoration of Catalonia. These experiences forged a personality which was always guided by convictions of utter commitment to scholarly work and to the country. Anyone who has interacted with Eva Serra is keenly aware

Despite a long, full life largely devoted to study and research, health problems had led him to languish in recent years. Nonetheless, until quite recently he still enjoyed writing reviews for the journal *Studia Monastica*, and despite his eyesight problems, he still closely tracked the new books that entered the monastery’s library on a daily basis. Furthermore, his good humour contributed to creating a positive atmosphere in the house’s infirmary, where we had lived together almost a year and where he will be sorely missed for so many reasons.

that behind her physically frail appearance was a historian and political activist of extraordinary fortitude.

In 1960, she began studying Philosophy and Humanities at the Universidad de la Laguna, where her uncle Elies Serra i Ràfols (Mahon 1898-Santa Cruz de Tenerife 1972) was a professor of the History of Spain. Later, after two academic years there, she transferred to the Universitat de Barcelona, which she would always consider her alma mater, and where she finished her specialisation in history. In addition to the influence and teachings of her uncle, who had written his doctoral thesis on Ferdinand the Catholic and the issue of the serfs, in the 1960s Eva and her sister Blanca attended underground classes held by “Estudis Universitaris Catalans”. There, they were trained in history and methodology by personalities like Ferran Soldevila, Miquel Coll i Alentorn, Jordi Rubió i Balaguer and Joaquim Molas.

In 1966, Eva Serra published her first book, *La Guerra dels Segadors*, which addressed a historical topic that would set the course of her subsequent career as a researcher. This text was written when Eva Serra was scarcely twenty years old and had not yet finished her degree in Philosophy and Humanities, yet it shows glimpses of her mettle as a historian. Thus, ignoring the interpretations of renowned scholarly authorities like Jaume Vicens Vives and John H. Elliott, who saw the Catalan institutional system prior to 1714 as a throwback in the midst of the modernity of the newly-minted great monarchies, a young Eva Serra claimed that “the Catalan constitutions were oligarchic privileges, true, but they were also the only weapon that the country had to deal with absolutism, which was tantamount to castilianisation”.

The young Eva Serra’s interest in the War of the Reapers, or Catalan Revolt, sprang from a twofold motivation. First, in the mid-1960s, the deeds of 1640 were a historical referent for the Front Nacional de Catalunya, the pro-independence movement in which she was involved, since they both conjoined political struggle with grassroots mobilisation. Yet her interest in the War of the Reapers also reflected her own lived experience. Eva and her siblings had been raised in the neighbourhood of Guinardó, yet they always maintained close ties to Sant Andreu del Pal-

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