

In Memoriam

Maria Teresa Ferrer i Mallol (1940-2017)*



On the 4th of March 2017, Dr Maria Teresa Ferrer i Mallol left us after three and a half years of illness.

She earned a Bachelor's in Philosophy and Humanities from the Universitat de Barcelona in 1963, and even before completing her degree she was associated with the Department of Medieval Studies of the Institució Milà i Fontanals,

part of the Spanish Council for Scientific Research (CSIC) in Barcelona, thanks to her mentor, Dr. Emilio Sáez. After 1972, her scholarly career unfolded in this institution, where she was on staff.

Immediately after earning her Bachelor's degree, she made several research journeys to Italy, which influenced some of her earliest works and more importantly, laid the groundwork for the internationalisation of her career. She also taught classes at the Universitat de Barcelona, and for years she worked with the Arxiu Històric de Protocols (Historical Archive of Protocols) of Barcelona, which left its mark on her output via publications on the drawing up of the notary instrument and on insurance and mediaeval maritime exchanges (in the latter case, with Arcadi Garcia), which are still important references.

She earned her doctorate from the Universitat de Barcelona in 1984 with an impressive thesis entitled *Moros i cristians, almogàvers i collerats a la frontera d'Oriola*.

Maria Teresa Ferrer i Mallol was the director of the CSIC's Institució Milà i Fontanals in Barcelona between 1985 and 1994. She was the editor of the journal *Anuario de Estudios Medievales* between 1983 and 2010, the series "Anejos del Anuario de Estudios Medievales" between 1983 and 1987, the document series *Miscel·lània de Textos Medievales* since 1983, and *Repertorio de Medievalismo Hispánico* until 2010.

She was a member of the board of the Sociedad Española de Estudios Medievales (Spanish Society for Mediaeval Studies) since 1993 and its vice president between 2001 and 2007.

She was a full member of the History-Archaeology Section of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans (IEC) since 1992, its secretary from 1995 to 2001, its vice president from 2001 to 2006, and its president from 2006 to 2014.

She retired from the CSIC as a Research Professor in August 2010, with a drive that far from curtailing her perennially incessant activity instead only intensified it, although thereafter it was channelled through the IEC.

She was a woman of substance with clear, vehement ideas who always said what was on her mind with no holds barred. This drive and force of character unquestionably helped her carve a niche for herself and gain the respect and admiration of a clique which had been wholly male until quite recently. When she took over the helm of the CSIC's Institució Milà i Fontanals in 1985, she was already a touchstone, internationally enshrined and known everywhere for her studies on the Crown of Aragon and contacts with Islam and the Mediterranean world, on par with names from her generation who were all men, with just a handful of exceptions.

Shortly before she became ill, she was presented with a compilation of studies in homage to her at CSIC on the 22nd of May 2013, which she anticipated with relish. It included not only 70 selected contributions but also a 13-page *tabula gratulatoria*.¹

Just a quick survey of the list of participants strikingly reveals the impact of her work in Catalan, Iberian and international medievalism. Summed up in the volume of her output, this impact gives us ample licence to describe her as the *grande dame* of Catalan medievalism.

Until 2011, Maria Teresa Ferrer i Mallol had published or edited 35 monographs and collective volumes, around 100 journal articles and 150 book chapters, in addition to her almost infinite "lesser output" (sic) of articles for encyclopaedias and dictionaries, and book introductions and reviews.²

Thereafter, this effort only increased, even during the course of her illness, incontestable proof of her incredible tenacity and capacity for work. And, in fact, it is still ongoing, since she died with numerous publications still unpublished and in the pipeline.³

Beyond her own output, Maria Teresa Ferrer i Mallol cultivated a generous, advisorly, altruistic facet as a scholar, as recognised by countless researchers both young and old, from near and far, who for decades have been trained at CSIC's Institució Milà i Fontanals in Barcelona or who have come through it as visitors. And the latest generation of young researchers still in training was able to enjoy this wisdom until the very end.

* Text prepared by Roser SALICRÚ i LLUCH. Institució Milà i Fontanals - CSIC (Barcelona)

In a different vein, Maria Teresa Ferrer i Mallol also had a noteworthy ability to develop a school and bring people together, both through the Spanish and international research projects she led and in the consolidated research group for the Generalitat de Catalunya that she coordinated.

There is no doubt that her overwhelming body of work boasts extraordinary rigour and erudition. Her works are impeccable, utterly solid, destined to outlast all historiographical fads and tendencies. They have been and will continue to be a referent, and for this very reason, they have often become classics.

Her works were also undertaken with the cognizance of what she understood as her national, cultural and linguistic commitment, for which she was penalised at times.

It would be an outlandish undertaking to try to summarise or assess her enormous output, so instead I will just highlight what may be its two most solid centrepieces.

The first is from her latter years: her historical survey of the four major chronicles edited by Ferran Soldevila reissued by the Institut d'Estudis Catalans, an admirable endeavour which only a person with her capacity for work, rigour and knowledge of historical, bibliographic and document sources could begin to undertake.⁴

The second is what we could call her own four major chronicles, that is, the four monographs she published around 30 years ago based on her doctoral thesis: *Els sarraïns de la Corona catalano-aragonesa en el segle XIV. Segregació i discriminació; La frontera amb l'Islam en el segle XIV. Cristians i sarraïns al País Valencià; Les aljames sarraïnes de la governació d'Oriola (segle XIV)* and *Organització i defensa d'un territori fronterer: La governació d'Oriola en el segle XIV*.⁵

Maria Teresa Ferrer i Mallol left us before her time, before she should have. She had travelled a long way, but still had so much farther to go.

Fortunately, her historiographic legacy will live on.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- [1] J. Mutgé i Vives, R. Salicrú i Lluch and C. VELA AULESA (ed.). *La Corona catalanoaragonesa, l'islam i el món mediterrani. Estudis d'història medieval en homenatge a la doctora Maria Teresa Ferrer i Mallol*. IMF-CSIC, Barcelona 2013.
- [2] The list of her publications between 1963 and 2011 can be seen in the aforementioned volume of homage, pp. xvii-xlvi.
- [3] The updated, complete and definitive list of her publications will appear in fascicle 47/1 (January-June 2017) of the journal *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, which can be viewed online at: <http://estudiosmedievales.revistas.csic.es/index.php/estudiosmedievales/issue/archive> [DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.3989/aem.2017.v47.i1>]
- [4] F. SOLDEVILA. *Les quatre grans Cròniques*. Philological review by J. Bruguera, historical review by M. T. Ferrer i Mallol. IEC, Barcelona 2008-2016. This reissue of the chronicles crowns the other initiatives and contributions also spearheaded by the IEC, such as the commemoration of the birth of the Generalitat de Catalunya and of James I, the death of Martin the Humane, and the volumes containing the diplomatic treaties and negotiations of Catalonia and the Crown of Catalonia-Aragon in the Middle Ages, in this case in conjunction with the also deceased Manuel Riu i Riu.
- [5] Institució Milà i Fontanals – CSIC, Barcelona 1987, 1988, 1988 and 1990.