

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.

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.

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

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-

* Text prepared by ANTONI SIMON (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona and Institut d’Estudis Catalans). The initial version of this text was published in “Eva Serra i Puig. Trajectòria d’una gran historiadora”, *Serra d’Or* 706 (October 2018), pp. 20-23. Photograph by Jordi Pareto. Photographic Archive Collection of the Institut d’Estudis Catalans.

omar. The remains of what was known as the chapel of the Reapers in the church in Plaça de l'Orfila had captured the young Eva Serra's attention because the peasants had gathered there on the 22nd of May 1640, sparking the grassroots uprising which entered Barcelona for the first time and secured deputy Francesc Tamarit's release from the royal prisons. As is well-documented today, this episode was crucial in the political rupture between the Court of Madrid and the Catalan institutions.

After working on several publishing projects, including the *Gran Enciclopèdia Catalana*, for which she wrote a series of extraordinarily high-quality entries, in 1970 she began her scholarly career at the recently-created Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. There she shared a department and a zeal to update the university and historiography with an enthusiastic group of young professors, including Josep Termes, Josep Fontana, Albert Balcells and Borja de Riquer. In 1975, she moved to the Universitat de Barcelona and later taught at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra (between 1992 and 1997) before returning to the Universitat de Barcelona, where she had been an emeritus professor since 2012.

The work undertaken by Eva Serra over these decades has been crucial to the burgeoning of modernist Catalan historiography. She first wanted to direct her research towards the social and economic side of the War of the Reapers in order to shed light on the origins of the peasant uprising. However, since she found no sources similar to the ones which had enabled authors like Boris Porchnev to analyse the great peasant uprisings of the 17th century, she chose instead to further delve into the more general context of the productive relations in the Catalan countryside during that century, connecting the study of the agrarian economy with the study of legal and social relations. The outcome of this work undertaken in the 1970s was her doctoral thesis supervised by Emili Giralt, which was presented at the Universitat de Barcelona in 1978 and published ten years later by the Crítica publishing house with the title of *Pagesos i senyors a la Catalunya del segle XVII. Baronia de Sentmenat 1590-1729*. In this work, which is still the most solid monograph on the agrarian history of modern Catalonia to date, Eva Serra made original contributions which are essential to understanding the history of the rural Catalan economy and society in the early centuries of the Modern Age. First, she outlined the redefinition imposed upon the Catalan seigneurial system after the serf wars in the 15th century and the Sentència Arbitral de Guadalupe of 1486 by examining the strategies the peasants used to erode the feudal revenues in the subsequent period. Secondly, despite the serious dearth of sources available in this area of research, Eva Serra reconstructed the evolution in agrarian techniques, production and prices during those centuries, establishing the main phases or stages in the productive forces related to the rural economy. Finally, she explained the social diversification process which occurred in Catalan agrarian society, particularly after the

second half of the 17th century, a process of social diversification and stratification which is fundamental to understanding the changes in the modes of production that Vilar detected in the 18th century, which would later conduct the Catalan economy towards the road of capitalist development.

In addition to devoting several studies to further examining different aspects addressed in her doctoral thesis, Eva Serra made contributions, always analytically rich and substantiated with ample documentation, to topics like the repression after the War of the Reapers, the nature of the constitutional status in the period 1652-1705, the role of cities and villages when the Courts were called, the trajectories of certain families from the Catalan ruling class in the 16th and 17th centuries, the organisation of taxation by the Diputació del General, the nature of the War of the Reapers and the War of the Spanish Succession in Catalonia, and the development of modernist Catalan historiography. These studies were published in journals like *Afers*, *Pedralbes*, *Recerques*, *Butlletí de la Societat Catalana d'Estudis Històrics*, *Manuscrits*, *Catalan Historical Review*, *Estudis d'Història Agrària*, etc., along with a solid number of contributions to collectively-authored volumes.

I believe that it is worth noting that in her research into both agrarian and political-institutional history, Eva Serra was always mindful of including and critically examining theoretical and methodological contributions that were evolving in European historiography. Yet at the same time, she always drew from and appreciated the rich historiographic tradition of scholars of the history of law, Church history and local history which had been undertaken in Catalonia since the late 19th century, often outside academia, which were therefore often undervalued. The impressive work of personalities like Joan Serra Vilaró, Josep M. Pons i Guri, Antoni Pladevall, Jaume Codina and Eduard Junyent is contained and vindicated in the texts of Eva Serra.

In 1640. *Una revolució política. La implicació de les institucions*, issued by Crítica publishing house in 1991, Eva Serra undertook yet another overarching assessment of the meaning of the War of the Reapers in the trajectory of Catalonia's historical formation. By defining the events of 1640-1641 as a political revolution which drew from and updated the institutional and legislative legacy inherited from the mediaeval centuries in a bid to defend the Catalan community from the fiscal and military onslaught from the monarchic absolutism of Philip IV and Olivares, Eva Serra highlighted that the "the 'aristocratic' constitutions and the 'oligarchic' institutions saved the country from such havoc and wickedness".

Even though, as we have seen, her subsequent research took extraordinarily rich and varied pathways in terms of the topics she studied, the main bulk of her efforts in the last three decades undoubtedly sought to analyse the institutional and legislative structures of Catalan constitutionalism prior to 1714. These studies were organised

around two main strands. The first sought to provide a document foundation for her analysis based on the publication of texts that are crucial to understanding the Courts, the Diputació del General and the Consell de Cent in the early centuries of the Modern Age. Accompanied by a team of competent disciples, in the “Textos Jurídics Catalans” collection Eva Serra published several proceedings from the Courts of 1585 and 1705-1706, and from the Junta General de Braços of 1713-1714. Likewise, within the IEC’s “Memòries de la Secció Històrico-Arqueològica” collection, she published the *llibres de l'ànima* of the Diputació del General and the Consell de Cent (the latter currently in the process of publication), that is, the list of people with the rights to political representation in the country’s two main institutions.

The second major strand in this avenue of research on the institutional and legislative structures of modern Catalonia took shape in a series of articles and monographs which examined the theoretical underpinnings and political practice of “old Catalan constitutionalism”. In these works, Eva Serra highlighted the values of representativeness, political participation, control and regulation of the executive power based on criteria of collective interest and the Catalan institutions’ and legal regimes’ ability to evolve prior to 1714. Lately, in conjunction with Josep Capdeferro, Eva Serra devoted her research efforts to studying the Tribunal de Contrafaccions created in the Courts of Barcelona of 1701-1702. This court, which had three judges appointed by the king and three by the Braços, became the supreme legal arena to rule on violations of Catalan legal system. The Tribunal de Contrafaccions can be considered an essential milestone in European constitutional history, and it is worth noting that it was the outcome of the Catalan institutions’ lengthy struggle lasting more than two decades to overcome the lack of equanimity shown by the Reial Audiència of Catalonia in its resolution of these cases of legal infractions or violations.

This series of works based on documents and historical analysis rested on solid empirical foundations in an effort to break down the old trope that the Catalan constitutional institutions and regime were a mediaeval political model that was obsolete, oligarchic and corrupt, and which therefore inevitably had to be marginalised by the modern centralising, unitary model of the matrix of the Castilian court. Eva Serra, who received the “Justícia” prize of Catalonia in 2008 for her extraordinary efforts in this area of the institutional and legislative history of modern Catalonia, used official ceremonies to divulge these ideas. Thus, in her welcome speech as a full member of the History-Archaeology Section of the IEC read in November 2003 with the title *Les Corts catalanes, una bona font d’informació històrica*, she stated that the Catalan historical institutions “were the representation of more horizontal interests than a monarchy with a clearly aristocratic base, as well as the guarantor of the defence of the secular political identity of a specific social formation”. In the lecture she delivered in 2015 in the Barcelona Town Hall’s Saló de Cent to commemorate the emblematic Onze de Setembre of 1714, which bore the telling title of *La potencialitat democràtica de la Catalunya històrica*, Eva Serra upheld the thesis that on that date Catalans were not celebrating a defeat but instead rallying behind an advanced, modern political and social model since, in the early 18th century, Catalonia “was a very politically mature society which was becoming contemporary following the British and Dutch model by revamping the old instruments”.

This research legacy, extraordinarily generous in both quantity and quality, would be more than enough to make Eva Serra a crucial referent in Catalan historiography; yet she is for another reason that is equally if not more important: Eva Serra always lived in accordance with the values and ideas she upheld, combining honesty and scholarly rigour, the two main foundations which make a historian’s intellectual work credible.