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Joan Alcover



Joan Alcover i Maspons

(Nou diccionari 62 de la literatura catalana - New Dictionary 62 of Catalan Literature)

Palma, 1854-1926. Poet and essayist. He completed his secondary schooling at the Institute Balear where he was a pupil of Joan Lluís Pons i Gallarza and classmate of [Costa i Llobera](#) and Antoni Maura, after which he studied Law in Barcelona. After obtaining his degree in 1878, he returned to Palma where he worked as a lawyer. After 1886 he continued his career in the judiciary as a court reporter, as Court Secretary after 1894 and magistrate in the Provincial Court after 1911. At the same time, he had also embarked on a political career as a follower of Antoni Maura of whom he was a close personal friend: as municipal councillor (1879), provincial member for Manacor (1883) and member of the Spanish Parliament (1893). After a short stay in Madrid, he decided to return to Palma and abandon his political activities. Thenceforth, his support for Maura's policies was purely formal and began to wane as he drew closer to pro-Catalan politics and, in particular to the Lliga Regionalista.

A complex of personal and family circumstances had a notable influence in his literary career. In 1881 he had married Rosa Pujol i Guarch who was from Barcelona. They had three children, Pere, Teresa and Gaietà. His wife died in 1887. In 1891 he married a Mallorcan woman, Maria del Haro i Rosselló, with whom he had two more children, Maria and Pau. The latter is the only one who survived: in 1901 his daughter Teresa had died of tuberculosis; in 1905 his son Pere died of typhus; and, in 1919, on the same night his daughter Maria died in Mallorca and his son Gaietà died in Barcelona. Death has a considerable presence in his work wherein he channelled it into elegy, while giving a personal, existential sense to his creative activity. Prior to this, until the early years of the twentieth century, Alcover had been well on the way to becoming a prototypical provincial intellectual. After 1872 he had begun to publish poems in Catalan and Spanish in *Revista Balear*, *Museo Balear* and *El Isleño* and had even been awarded an extraordinary prize in the Barcelona literary competition known as the [Jocs Florals](#) for his poem "La creu" (The Cross).

Writing poetry was a complement to his social functions as a prestigious and outstanding citizen, the centre of a discussion group of the island's best-known intellectuals who regularly met in his home. His initial support, in his student years, for the beginnings of the Catalan renaissance movement, the [Renaixença](#) continued, although it would become more nuanced as he progressively moved towards almost exclusively adopting Spanish as his poetic language. Hence he regularly published collections of his work: *Poesías* (Poems ` 1887), which included three poems in Catalan, a number that grew to seven in a considerably expanded second edition (1892); *Nuevas poesías* (New Poems ` 1892), with only one poem in Catalan; the translation of Carducci's *Fantasia* (Fantasy); *Poemas y Armonías* (Poems and Harmonies ` 1894), and *Meteoros* (Metereors ` 1901), the latter two works entirely in Spanish. His poetry was close to that of Campoamor or Núñez de Arce and, at the time, enjoyed some degree of success with the critics (Menéndez y Pelayo, Juan Valera, etc.), while more recently it has been subject to widely varying reappraisal by such critics as [Llompart](#), Vidal Alcover and Antoni Comas, among others.

Between 1899 and 1903, his attitude towards the language changed and, after a period in which he

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defended bilingualism, he finally consciously and unequivocally adopted Catalan in an irreversible decision that he justifies in numerous writings (and especially in a speech given at the International Congress on the Catalan Language in 1906, *La llengua catalana és entre nosaltres l'única expressió possible de l'escriptor artista* (Among Ourselves, the Catalan Language is the Only Possible Expression for the Writer and Artist). Interpretation of the reasons for this change has given rise to much controversy. In general it is seen as related with the death of his daughter Teresa, which led him into adopting a poetics of sincerity, an instrument for expressing his mourning on which he would base his poems. There are, nonetheless, cultural factors involved and, in particular, the impact in Palma of a Modernist group around Miquel dels Sants Oliver, which promoted an intense cultural life of modernisation and integration in Catalan circles with a programme that would end up taking shape as what is known as the "Mallorca School". In this framework, Alcover found a space of his own for effective cultural action, giving social sense to his creative activity so that his poetry, while it became more personal, also acquired a human and collective charge.

The group of intellectuals who met in his home would come to constitute a cultural bridge with the mainland, especially because of the assiduous presence of [Santiago Rusiñol](#) and, later, of [Josep Carner](#), among many others. He thus became well integrated into Catalan cultural life and was one of the speakers at the Cycle on Mallorcan Writers organised by the Barcelona Ateneu in 1904.

His speech, *Humanització de l'art* (Humanisation of Art), which

constitutes his most significant poetic declaration, was published with other texts in the book *Art i literatura* (Art and Literature ` 1904). Here he declares his opposition to the tendencies of art for art's sake, the symbolists and Parnassians, showing that he was clearly in tune with the veristic and vitalist trends of the time that upheld the links between poetic creation and emotional, personal experience. He thus synthesises in some respects the poetic theories of [Joan Maragall](#) and [Santiago Rusiñol](#), speaking out for conciliation between writer and society, the contemplative point of departure for poetic creation and the messianic conception of the poet through which he acquires a collective dimension or responsibility. At the same time, however, he calls for mastery in technique and extreme care with language because he believes that poetry must be in the service of communication and clarity. It is likely that, with these ideas, he was also closely following the theories of Tolstoy to whom he devoted an essay that was probably written in 1921.

The most precise manifestation of this theorising is his own poetic work, which was published in 1909 in the volume *Cap al tard*, one of the major and most influential collections in twentieth-century Catalan poetry, a work that also brought him public recognition. In 1918 he published his last collection, *Poemes bíblics*, in which, through a series of visions of biblical figures (among them Hagar, Rebecca, Abigail, David, Saul and, the most dramatic of all, Respha), he approaches the questions of pain and the human tragedy, or what [Carles Riba](#) calls the "universal human idea". The volume closes with a series of *Proverbis* (Proverbs) that might be seen as derived from the elegies of *Cap al tard*. He was, by now, a man of considerable public standing: a master in *Gai Saber* (Art of Poetry ` 1909), a member of the Acadèmia de Bones Lletres de Barcelona (Barcelona Academy of Letters ` 1913), president of the [Jocs Florals](#) of Barcelona (1916) and a corresponding member of the IEC (Institute of Catalan Studies, 1916). In 1920, he was subject of a virulent attack by Antoni M. Alcover because of his support for the linguistic policy of the IEC.

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A selection of texts

Text



WEB: Selecció de Poesia Catalana

Poemes "Desolació", "La relíquia", "La Balanguera" i "Record de Sóller".

<http://www.uoc.edu/lletra/especials/folch/alcover.htm>



WEB: "La sirena"

Set poemes a Magisteri Teatre-Mag Poesia.

<http://www.mallorcaweb.com/Mag-Teatre>



WEB: "Raixa"

Els poemes "Desolació" i "La Balanguera", entre les lletres de les cançons del disc *Raix*a, de Maria del Mar Bonet.

<http://www.bonet.amics.pccc.8m.net/raixa.html>



WEB: Alcover a EPdLP

Nota biogràfica en castellà amb un poema a El Poder de la Palabra.

<http://www.epdip.com/escritor.php?id=2925>



PDF: 'Desolation'

A poem of Joan Alcover translated by Jordi Torres. In *Catalan International View*, n. 7.

http://international-view.cat/armari/internationalview:internationalview/2/civ07_26_poem.pdf



WEB: Selection of Catalan Poetry

The poems "Desolació" ("Desolation"), "La relíquia" ("The Relic"), "La Balanguera" ("The Folk Dancer") and "Record de Sóller" ("Memory of Sóller").

<http://www.uoc.edu/lletra/especials/folch/alcover.htm>



WEB: "La sirena" (The Mermaid)

Seven poems on the Magisteri Teatre-Mag Poesia web page.

<http://www.mallorcaweb.com/Mag-Teatre>



WEB: "Raixa" (Ardour)

The poems "Desolació" and "La Balanguera", among the lyrics of the songs on the CD *Raix*a by Maria del Mar Bonet.

<http://www.bonet.amics.pccc.8m.net/raixa.html>



AUDIO: "La Balanguera", interpretat per Maria del Mar Bonet

<http://www.musicadepoetes.cat/app/musicadepoetes/servlet/org.uoc.lletra.musicadepoetes.Titol?autor=44&titol=43>

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Bio-bibliography



WEB: A la Hiperenciclopèdia

http://www.enciclopedia.cat/fitxa_v2.jsp?NDCHEC=0002092



WEB: A la Viquipèdia

Biografia i obra de l'autor al web de l'enciclopèdia lliure.

http://ca.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joan_Alcover



WEB: Membre de l'IEC

Joan Alcover, membre corresponent de l'Institut d'Estudis Catalans.

<http://apmembres2.iec.cat/detall.aspx?pkMembrePLE=4>



WEB: The author in the Catalan Encyclopaedia

<http://www.grec.cat/cgi-bin/heclangl2.pgm?&USUARI=&SESSIO=&NDCHEC=0002092&PGMORI=E>



WEB: Member of the IEC

Joan Alcover, a member of the Institut d'Estudis Catalans (Institute of Catalan Studies).

<http://apmembres2.iec.cat/detall.aspx?pkMembrePLE=4>

Bibliography



WEB: Què hi ha a la Biblioteca de Catalunya

http://cataleg.bnc.cat/search*cat/?searchtype=a&searcharg=Alcover+Joan&sortdropdown=-&searchscope=13&searchscope2=13&SORT=D



WEB: Què hi ha a les biblioteques universitàries catalanes (CCUC)

http://ccuc.cbuc.cat/search*cat/a?SEARCH=Alcover+Joan&sortdropdown=-&searchscope=23



WEB: Què hi ha a les biblioteques públiques

<http://argus.biblioteques.gencat.cat/iii/encore/search/C|SAlcover+Joan|Orightresult|U1?lang=cat&suite=pearl>



WEB: Per comprar-ne llibres

<http://www.llibres.cat/ca/detall-autor/alcover-i-maspons-joan>



WEB: Articles de l'autor (Traces)

<http://traces.uab.cat/search?f=author&p=Alcover%20Joan&sc=1&ln=ca>



WEB: Articles sobre l'autor (Traces)

http://traces.uab.cat/search?ln=ca&p=Alcover%2C+Joan&f=keyword&action_search=Cerca&c=Traces+%3A+base+de+dades+de+llengua+i+literatura+catalanes&sf=&so=d&rm=&rg=10&sc=0&of=hb

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WEB: Works in the Biblioteca de Catalunya

http://cataleg.bnc.cat/search*eng/?searchtype=a&searcharg=Alcover+Joan&sortdropdown=-&searchscope=13&searchscope2=13&SORT=D



WEB: The author in The European Library

<http://search.theeuropeanlibrary.org/portal/en/search/%28%22creator%22+all+%22alcover+joan%22%29.query>



WEB: The author in the Congress Library (US)

<http://catalog.loc.gov/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?DB=local&PAGE=First>



WEB: The author in the COPAC Catalogue (UK)

<http://copac.ac.uk/search?&au=Joan+Alcover>

Comments on the author

Criticism



WEB: Prestatges de Biblionet

Selecció de tres poemes i extensos comentaris sobre l'autor i la seva obra.

<http://www.xtec.es/~Irius1/alcover/contenedor.htm>



PDF: "Goig i dol en la paraula de Joan Alcover"

Article de Lluís Solà sobre les obres *Cap al tard* i *Poemes bíblics*. A *l'Avui* (27/01/03). Segona Part.

<http://www.traces.uab.es/tracesbd/avui/av03634a.pdf>



WEB: Pàgina de l'AELC

Biografia, publicacions i altres materials.

<http://www.escriptors.com/autors/alcoverj/>



WEB: AELC Website

Biography, information, publications.

<http://www.escriptors.com/autors/alcoverj/>

Miscellaneous



WEB: "Auca de Joan Alcover"

Auca escrita per Joan Vilamala i il·lustrada per Jaume Gubianas al web *La paret de les auques*. Amb suggeriments de treball.

<http://www.auques.cat/tot.php?auca=alcover>



WEB: "Col·loqui"

Muntatge poètic de Magisteri Teatre-Mag Poesia amb els poemes "Desolació" i "Col·loqui".

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< <http://lletra.uoc.edu/en/author/joan-alcover> >

<http://www.mallorcaweb.com/Mag-Teatre/recitals2/colloqui.html>



WEB: Les romponents de l'infinit

Muntatge representat al Congrés Joan Alcover (Palma, 1-4 desembre del 2004).

<http://www.mallorcaweb.com/Mag-Teatre/recitals3/alcoverj.html>



WEB: "Col-loqui" (Colloquium)

Poetic montage by Magisteri Teatre-Mag Poesia with the poems "Desolació" and "Col-loqui".

<http://www.mallorcaweb.com/Mag-Teatre/recitals2/colloqui.html>



WEB: Les romponents de l'infinit (Breakwaters of the Infinite)

Montage for the Joan Alcover Congress (Palma, 1-4 December 2004).

<http://www.mallorcaweb.com/Mag-Teatre/recitals3/alcoverj.html>



WEB: Cap al tard i Poemes bíblics

Proposta de lectura a Biblionet, la guia interactiva de literatura catalana.

<http://www.xtec.es/~Irius1/alcover/contenedor.htm>