

Miquel Costa i Llobera



LA DEIXA DEL GENI GREC

LA DEIXA DEL GENI GREC ("The Legacy of the Greek Genius"), poem by Miquel Costa i Llobera (1901). His argument can be summarised as follows: The Greek poet Homer (8th century BC), also called Melesigenius, could have landed in Cluinba (Majorca) while sailing as a young man towards Hesperia (Western Mediterranean). He and eight companions are captured by the Tribe of the Oak, from the Balearic Islands. About to be sacrificed to the gods, Melesigenius sings a "Farewell to Greece" (and "farewell to life"), which makes Nuredduna, the tribe's priestess, fall in love with him. Feigning a sudden inspiration from on high, she excludes him from the sacrifice and has him taken to the Caves of Arta, the temple of the Invisible God. From there, Nuredduna soon releases him. As he is just about to return to his ship, Melesigenius wants to give his liberator the rhapsodic lyre - a key detail in the poem - but realises that he has forgotten it inside the cave. Nuredduna is to be stoned by the dissidents of her tribe, but not before announcing to them, in her role as a prophetess, the coming of a Messiah who, in the course of the centuries, will bring polytheism and barbarism to an end and establish universal charity. Amidst a chorus of alabaster virgins (the Cave's columns) and unspoilt undines (the eternal drops of water in there), Nuredduna dies holding the lyre at the bottom of the Caves. The terrible xenophobic tribe would later be destroyed by the pre-Roman population of the island: Bocchoris (today's Port de Pollença).

Somewhere between narration and description, the poem is above all symbolic: the lyre, "left and bequeathed" by Melesigenius, is the image of Greek inspiration (Homer) which fertilises Balearic inspiration (Nuredduna). Its critics understood that, in a fictional work like this, the lyre, which had been buried since prehistoric times in the bowels of Majorca, would be picked up and played by Costa i Llobera, who was also a priest and poet like Nuredduna. With his lofty style, his verses in Horatian rhythm, and his conception of the Classical World, he was a Humanist above all else - and a Christian Humanist at that. Thanks to Miquel Costa i Llobera, our shores are more closely linked and twinned with those of Greece and Rome. By giving Majorcan poetry a most noble origin - Homer's lyre - "La deixa del geni grec" is undoubtedly one of the greatest myths of Catalan literature.