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Miquel Costa i Llobera



Miquel Costa i Llobera
(Nou diccionari 62 de la literatura catalana)

Pollença, 1854 - Palma de Mallorca, 1922. Poet, translator, orator and prose writer

Costa i Llobera was born into a family of wealthy rich landowners and spent his childhood summers at a property in Formentera, the landscapes of which were to become the source of inspiration of many of his poems. His maternal uncle, Miquel Llobera, introduced him to the poetry of Horace. He completed his secondary schooling at the Institut Balear in Palma (1866-1871). One of his teachers there was Josep Lluís Pons i Gallarza, who left his mark on his pupil in the form of classical humanism. Here, too, he forged friendships with Joan Rosselló of Son Forteza and Joan Lluís Estelrich. In the academic year of 1872-73 he began to study Law in Barcelona and joined the literary Catalan nationalist circles which were led by members of the Catalan [Renaixença](#) (Renaissance) movement: [Marià Aguiló](#), Ramon Picó i Campamar, [Jacint Verdaguer](#) and Antoni Rubió i Lluch. His first writings in Catalan date from these years.

He continued his studies in Law in Madrid from 1875 to 1877. The prestige in those years of "Krausismo" [based on the ideas of the German "philosopher of identity" Karl Christian Friedrich Krause] shook the foundations of his religious faith. In 1878 he travelled to Paris and, on his return to Mallorca, he read the great French and Italian poets. In 1879, he discovered Carducci's *Odi barbare* and was impressed by the form of the poems while rejecting their pagan spirit. It was in these years, when he was living in Pollença, that his vocation to be a priest was awakened. His religious faith gave rise to intense moral scruples as a result of which he destroyed his first version of the ode "A Horaci" (To Horace, 1879) and repudiated his translation of Ovid. In 1885 he travelled to Rome to begin his studies in Theology and the same year his collection of poems *Poesies* (Poetry) was published. These are the first poems expressing a [romanticism](#) of very contained and composed tone in which judiciousness and formal perfection prevail, modulated by classical serenity. In this romantic vein, Costa reveals two intimately related thematic constants: religious sentiment and a feeling for his landscape.

His vision of the landscape, for example in "La Vall" (The Valley, 1873), shows an influence of Lamartine's poetry. On other occasions, some of his more brilliant poems like "El Pi de Formentor" (The Pine of Formentor, 1875) are reminiscent of the more grandiloquent tone of Victor Hugo. The landscape portrayed by the poet is real, mainly limited to the geography of Mallorca, especially Pollença, and of Formentor yet, in the end, it evolves into a literary landscape transcended to a universal category as a symbol of the Mediterranean. This is a landscape that reflects infinite yearning and the desire to exalt and move closer to God in beatific joy. Through poetry, Costa i Llobera was to achieve his ideal of an elevated life, with its roots "on high" in order to flee the dissatisfactions of mundane life, a way of being that was also so characteristic of the romantics and Baudelaire. "El Pi de Formentor" was to symbolise his vision of the poet as being nourished by the

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ideal.

On the other hand, some poems from this period clearly manifest a melancholic, sentimental mood inspired by the intimist poetry of G. A. Bécquer, as a reading of "Defalliment" (Faintness, 1876) reveals. In 1888 he was ordained as a priest and in 1889 he obtained his doctoral degree in Theology in Rome, where he became steeped in classicism. In 1890, on his definitive return to Mallorca, he wrote three narrative poems "La gerreta del catiu" (The Captive's Jug, 1895), "Castell del Rei" (The King's Castle, 1896) and "La maina" (Manna, 1897), which were grouped together in the romantic-tending volume *De l'agre de la terra* (From the Homeland, 1897). These poems re-create Mallorcan language, customs and cultural traditions. In *De l'agre de la terra* he tends to use popular forms of prosody, for example the romance, the ballad and the local form known as the *cololada* [combining eight-syllable lines that rhyme with lines of four or five syllables]. In 1899 he published *Líricas*, a collection of poems inspired by the monuments of the ancient city of Rome, written in Spanish and using classical metre.

At this time he read Leconte de Lisle and, in 1900, his great narrative poem "La deixa del geni grec" (The Bequest of Greek Genius) was published and subsequently received the "Englantina" (Royal Jasmine) Prize in the [Jocs Florals](#) literary competition of Barcelona (1902). In 1901, the Pollença Municipal Council named him an Illustrious Son of the town while, in 1902, he was nominated "Mestre en Gai Saber" (Master in the Art of Poetry) and designated a correspondent member of the Royal Spanish Academy (RAE). In 1903 he published *Tradicions i fantasies* (Traditions and Fantasies), which brings together pieces written in different periods, in lyrical-narrative form and inspired by Mallorcan legends. Some of these writings maintain the narrative, romantic and legendary tradition with which he embarked upon *De l'agre de la terra*, while other poems such as "La deixa del geni grec" suggest the new "Noucentista" [the early twentieth-century politico-cultural movement in the service of bourgeois reformism] vein of the *Horacianes* (Horatian Poems). In 1904 he presided over the Jocs Florals literary competition of Mallorca and, in the Barcelona Athenaeum, he gave the speech *La forma poètica* (The Poetic Form) in which he rejects both inspiration-based poetry and «the overly rhetorical and Parnassian trend, adored from the externalities of form», proposing instead harmony between form and content. Costa is also heir to the aesthetics of Torras i Bages, who upheld the need to be governed by transcendent order, balance and harmony resembling the natural order of life.

Costa's *Horacianes* appeared in 1906 and were a resounding success in Catalonia. The same year he gave the presidential address at the [Jocs Florals](#) of Barcelona and also took part in the First International Congress of the Catalan Language. In 1907 he published the volume of new *Poesies* (Poems), which brings together the poems of the 1885 edition, eight poetic compositions from *Tradicions i fantasies* and many other unpublished poems. Some of these new poems –such as "La gran alzina de Mossa" (The Great Holm Oak of Mossa) and "Cala Gentil" (Gentil Cove)– arise from contemplation of the landscape and culminate in aesthetic reflection. In the spring of 1907 Costa i Llobera set out, with a group of people from Mallorca, including the poetess Maria Antònia Salvà, on a journey through the Middle East that ended in the Holy Land. Costa took note in a diary of his impressions during the trip and these were to constitute the draft of his work *Visions de Palestina* (Visions of Palestine, 1908), which was originally titled *Croquis d'Orient* (Sketches of the East). This is a collection of twenty-six odes in prose in which, basing this exercise on parallels of concept or images, he adapted the Hebrew versicle to the Catalan language.

In 1908 he delivered the presidential speech at the Jocs Florals in Girona. In it he defines «the ideal of European art» as the fecund fusion of «romantic and the classical spirits», the paradigm of which is

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Goethe's work. In 1909 he was named Canon at the Mallorca cathedral. Disheartened by the events of Tragic Week, he curtailed his literary production and only published two exercises of his Via-Crucis (1907-1908) and the *Sermons panegírics* (Panegyric Sermons, 1916). He also translated a few writings of Virgil, Dante Alighieri, Petrarch, Michelangelo, Victor Hugo, Lamartine, among others. Between 1912 and 1922 he translated the *Himnes* (Hymns) of Prudentius, in which oxytone verse predominates, in contrast with the majestic proparoxytone verse of the *Horacianes*. Between 1907 and 1911 he translated the novels *Después de la Hora Nona* (After the Ninth Hour), *Mirarán hacia Él* (They Will Look to Him) and *Almas celtas* (Celtic Souls) of Reynés Monlaur, from French into Spanish. In 1921, he gave what was to be his final lecture at the Diocesan Museum: *Dante Alighieri i la seva obra* (Dante Alighieri and His Work). On 16 October 1922 Miquel Costa i Llobera died in the pulpit while he was preaching the panegyric of Saint Teresa of Avila.

A year after his death his *Obres completes* (Complete Works – 1923-24) were published by the review *Il·lustració Catalana*. In 1947 [Editorial Selecta](#) brought out the book *Obres Completes* (Complete Works), which includes the epistolary with Joan Rosselló of Son Forteza and Antoni Rubió Lluch and, in 1985, Bartomeu Torres Gost published *Epistolari de Miquel Costa i Llobera i Antoni Rubió i Lluch a Joan Lluís Estelrich* (Miquel Costa i Ribera's and Antoni Rubió Lluch's Correspondence with Joan Lluís Estelrich). The poetry of Costa i Llobera represents a moving-on from the Catalan renaissance movement, the [Renaixença](#), and from the clichés of the Jocs Florals poetry. He starts out from [Romanticism](#) and links up with [Noucentisme](#), passing lightly through [Modernisme](#). He always moved between two aesthetic constants: Romanticism and Classicism. Costa's Romanticism maintains Apollonian serenity while the classicism of the *Horacianes* reveals at some points a Dionysian furore, the spark of the youthful romantic impetus. This is why some critics, for example Rubió i Lluch, have said that Costa was a classic of Romanticism and a romantic of Classicism.

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A selection of texts

Text

 **WEB: 'Trees for Cati'**

Translation of the poem 'Arbres per na Cati' by Costa i Llobera.

<http://catalansongtranslations.blogspot.com/2011/10/arbres-per-na-cati-anegats.html>

 **WEB: *Poesies* (Poems)**

The 1885 edition of this collection. In the section of books printed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of the "Memòria Digital de Catalunya" (Digital Memory of Catalonia) in the Biblioteca de Catalunya (National Library of Catalonia).

<http://mdc.cbuc.cat/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/llibimps19&CISOPTR=5874>

 **WEB: Manuscript of 'Cançó de maig' (Song of May)**

In the Digital Library of the Barcelona Athenaeum.

<http://mdc.cbuc.cat/cdm4/document.php?CISOROOT=/manuscritAB&CISOPTR=43771>

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 **WEB: Miquel Costa i Llobera in Google Books**

<https://lletra.uoc.eduhttps://www.google.com/search?tbm=bks&tbo=1&hl=en&q=inauthor%3Amiquel+costa+i+llobera&btnG=>

 **WEB: Miquel Costa i Llobera in WorldCat**

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Bio-bibliography

Biography

 **WEB: Biographical note**

Brief file on Costa i Llobera at Encyclopedia.com.

<http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1E1-CostaiLI.html>

 **WEB: The author in the Catalan Encyclopaedia**

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 **WEB: The author in The European Library**

<http://search.theeuropeanlibrary.org/portal/en/search/%28%22costa%20i%20llobera+miquel%22%29.query>

 **WEB: The author in the Congress Library (US)**

http://catalog.loc.gov/cgi-bin/Pwebrecon.cgi?hd=1,2&Search_Arg=Costa%20i%20Llobera&Search_Code=NAME%40&CNT=100&PID=hh-tWlnCNWhrjvGVtTAKqzYiBsS&HIST=0&SEQ=20110829052433&SID=1

 **WEB: The author in the COPAC Catalogue (UK)**

<http://copac.ac.uk/search?&au=costa+i+llobera%2C+miquel&sort-order=ti%2C-date>

 **WEB: Articles by the author**

In Traces, the database of Catalan language and literature.

http://traces.uab.cat/search?ln=en&p=costa+i+llobera%2C+miquel&f=author&action_search=Search&c=Traces+%3A+base+de+dades+de+llengua+i+literatura+catalanes&sf=&so=d&rm=&rg=10&sc=1&of=hb

 **WEB: Articles about the author**

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http://traces.uab.cat/search?ln=en&p=Costa+i+Llobera%2C+Miquel&f=keyword&action_search=Search&c=Traces+%3A+base+de+dades+de+llengua+i+literatura+catalanes&sf=&so=d&rm=&rg=10&sc=1&of=hb

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Comments on the author

Criticism

 **WEB: Website of the Association of Catalan Language Writers**

Biography, publications and other materials.

http://www.escriptors.cat/autors/costam/pagina.php?id_sec=774

 **WEB: Costa i Llobera at Corpus Literari Ciutat de Barcelona**

Biographical note, links and transcription of articles on Costa i Llobera.

http://www.ducros.cat/corpus/index.php?command=show_news&news_id=522

 **PDF: 'La deixa de Costa i Llobera' (The Legacy of Costa i Llobera)**

Review by Melcior Mateu of the edition *Poesia Completa* (Complete Poetic Works) edited by Gabriel de la S.T. Sampol. In *Avui* (17 March, 2005).

<http://www.traces.uab.es/tracesbd/avui/av03770.pdf>

 **PDF: 'La petita pàtria dins la poesia de Miquel Costa i Llobera' (Home Ground in the Poetry of Miquel Costa i Llobera)**

A study by Maria del Carme Bosch on landscape as a main theme in Costa's poetic work. In *Llengua & Literatura*, 18 (2007).

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 **PDF: 'El llegat mallorquí' (The Mallorcan Bequest)**

Jordi Llovet analyses the influence of poets from the "Mallorcan School" and, in particular, that of Costa i Llobera in the poetry of "Noucentism". In *El País. Quadern* (04/12 2008).

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Miscelaneous

 **WEB: "Mossèn Costa i Llobera" Gardens**

Information on the Costa i Llobera Gardens at the website of the Barcelona City Council.

http://w110.bcn.cat/portal/site/MediAmbient/menuitem.0d4d06202ea41e13e9c5e9c5a2ef8a0c/?vgnextoid=3e7c57f113b6a210VgnVCM10000074fea8c0RCRD&vgnextchannel=6de179583ad1a210VgnVCM10000074fea8c0RCRD&lang=en_GB
