

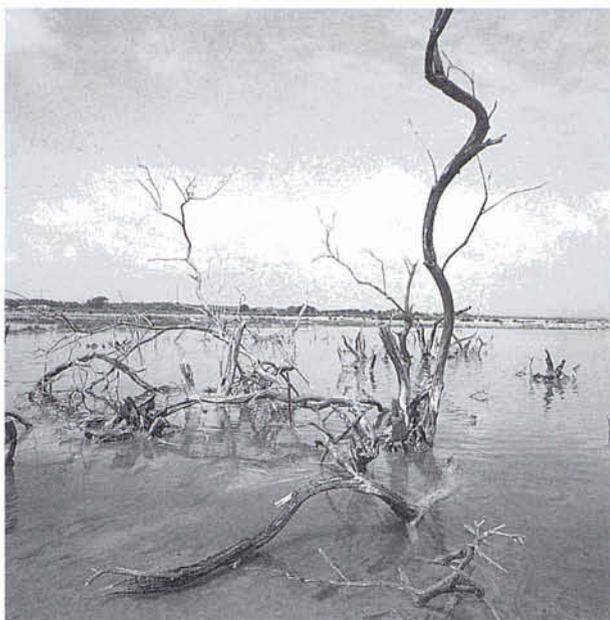
150 YEARS AFTER THE PUBLICATION OF *UN HIVER À MAJORQUE*



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IN *UN HIVER À MAJORQUE*, PUBLISHED IN PARIS IN 1841, GEORGE SAND SEVERELY CRITICISED THE MAJORCANS OF THE TIME. THE BOOK SOON MET WITH INDIGNANT CONDEMNATION.

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When they arrived on the island, Frédéric Chopin and George Sand had only known each other for two years. Their first meeting had taken place in 1836, when they were introduced by the musician Franz Liszt, but it was to be several months yet before they were to start living together, and the journey to Majorca in November 1838 was to be the public confirmation of their love affair, a relationship which was to last nine years, from 1838 to 1847, two years before the death of the great musician one autumn afternoon in the house at number twelve, Place Vendôme, in Paris.

The beginning of their relationship showed all the symptoms of an exultant, passionate and voluptuous love. A delirious love that led them, with all the force of sensuality and emotion, along unknown paths and on pilgrimages beyond the stars. Their experience at Valldemosa changed this spate of love. It took only a few months for Chopin to go from being a brilliant and irresistible pianist to a being man marked by disease, by physical suffering and by the anguish that shows itself in his Preludes. In the writings of George Sand –if we are to believe the 485 letters that mention Chopin between 1836 and 1845, according to Georges Lubin’s edition– the image of the lover is noticeably altered in the course of the first year of their love affair, developing from headstrong enthusiasm to weariness, passing through the maternal ado-

ration of which he speaks in *Histoire de ma vie*.

George Sand is discretion itself when she speaks of her intimate relations with Chopin. In a letter to her friend Albert Grzymala dated 12 May 1987, she said that since 1840 she had lived beside him like a virgin –“vit comme une vierge avec lui”–, although she complained that she suffered from the privation and abstinence: “lui il se plaint à moi de ce que je l’ai tué par la privation, tandis que j’avais la certitude de le tuer si j’agissais autrement”.

From Barcelona, the day after arriving on the way back from Majorca, on 15 February 1839, she wrote in a letter to Charlotte Marliani, “il m’aime comme sa mere”, and a month later, from Marseilles, she wrote, “j’ai trois enfants sur le bras”, and again, in June, she said, “avant tout, je m’occuperai de la santé de cet être que j’ai adopté et qui est devenu pour moi un autre Maurice”.

They had come to Majorca in the hope of prolonging the happiness of a liaison that seemed condemned to an ephemeral existence. The dilemma facing her was whether she should preserve her happiness through total love, but at the expense of health, at the expense of the life of the one she loved, or replace sensuous and dangerous joys with a chaste, maternal love of tenderness and devotion.

We shall never know exactly what happened in the cell in the Carthusian monastery of Valldemosa. We know that when she speaks of Chopin in the letters

written after March 1839 she does so in these terms: “our little Chopin”, “our patient”, “my poor Chopin”, “my patient”, etc. The sensual impulse has given way to less passionate feelings, and the image she communicates of the musician is one of fragility.

In *Un hiver à Majorque*, published in Paris in 1841, George Sand made a harsh attack on the Majorcans of the time, which could be summed up in the words she wrote in a letter to a friend of Chopin: “there where nature is beautiful and generous, the men are miserly and wicked”. In her diary of her winter on the island, she went so far as to say that the Majorcan is a lying, insulting, thieving savage, who would not hesitate to eat the body of his friend, if this was the custom of the country, and who, sunk in vice, is as odious as an ox or a lamb, because, like these animals, he slumbers in the innocence of brutality. Before long, George Sand’s book met with indignant condemnation. Josep M. Quadrado completed his defence in the last number of *La Palma*, of 25 April 1941, with these words: “George Sand is the most immoral of writers and Madame Dudevant the foulest of women”.

She had come to the island perhaps in the hope of finding Rousseau’s noble savages, morally perfect and happy.

She was unable to understand why those Majorcan peasants who treated them so badly were not the natural, upright men the fathers of the French Revolution spoke of. ●

