

THE EDITIONS OF TIRANT LO BLANC

AS WE APPROACH THE FIVE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY OF ITS PUBLICATION BY THE VALENCIAN PRESSES, *TIRANT* IS ON ITS WAY TO BECOMING A BEST-SELLER.

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Venècia, 1611



Londres, 1737

Tirant was a successful novel from the very start. Two editions appeared in the last decade of the fifteenth century, both in Gothic characters in folio. Certain typographic variations between the three surviving copies of the first edition suggest the possibility of a reprinting. However, the differences only affect the first quire: in two copies, the title page has a decorated border which is not present in the third, and some of the initial letters vary. This first edition, completed by Nicolau Spindeler in Valencia on 20th November 1490, is described as consisting of 715 copies, and the second, completed in Barcelona in 1497 by the bookseller Pere Miquel and the printer Diego de Gumiel, approximately half as many. In ten years, the Catalan-speaking world, with an estimated 650,000 inhabitants at the end of the fifteenth century, consumed a thousand copies of *Tirant*. In present-day terms, this is the equivalent of an edition of some 10,000/15,000 copies, a figure which very few titles reach unless they are recommended as educational texts. In the

sixteenth century, however, despite the amount of chivalric literature that was published, no further editions of *Tirant* appeared in the language in which it was originally written. However, the book was already well-known beyond our borders. In 1511, Diego de Gumiel, who had been responsible for the production of the Barcelona edition, brought out the first Castilian translation, in Valladolid, in a folio volume, possibly reissued in 1553. Before that, Isabel d'Este, marchioness of Mantua, whose admiration for Martorell and Galba's novel had scandalized Marcelino Menéndez y Pelayo, had ordered an Italian version from Niccolò de Corregio, though it is not known whether it ever saw the light of day. A different version, by Lelio de Manfredi, was printed in Venice in 1538 by Niccolino da Sabbio, in a quarto volume, and was reprinted in the same city by Domenico Farri, in 1566, and by Lucio Spineda, in 1611, both being three-volume editions in sexto-decimo. Both the anonymous Castilian translation and the Tuscan version are of a high literary standard and show a

good knowledge of Catalan on the part of their respective translators. Cervantes knew *Tirant* in the first of these two translations and, thanks to the second —via Ariosto's *Orlando furioso* and Belleforest's *Histoires tragiques*—the novel's subject matter became known to Shakespeare.

The eighteenth was *Tirant's* French century. The first edition in this language, attributed to C. Ph. de Tubières, count of Caylus, appeared in 1737. It is not translated directly from the original, but is based on the Italian translation, almost certainly the work of the historian Nicolas Fréret, which is the first critical piece ever written about the novel. The publishing manoeuvres that went on to put the censor off the scent have led to a certain confusion as regards dating the various printings, of which, it seems, there were five in the whole of the century. There is one, printed in London, which bears the date 1737 and whose existence was hitherto unknown to bibliographers. Two more, without any date, were printed in Amsterdam and London. All three are two-vo-



lume editions in octavo, though it should be noted that the typography in the first is different to that of the other two, which only differ as regards the place of printing mentioned on the title page. In 1775, a new, three-volume edition of the Caylus translation, also in octavo, was printed in London, and in 1706 another, two-volume edition in the same format was published in Amsterdam and Paris. This last bears a portrait and engravings by Davillier. It may also have been reprinted the following century.

Four hundred years were to pass before *Tirant* was reprinted in the language it was first written in; the Catalan version was practically unknown to our eighteenth century scholars. Maians himself was glad to get hold of a copy of the French translation, and it is not certain that bibliographers at the beginning of the nineteenth century, especially abroad, ascribed the book to Catalan literature. The third edition started to appear in 1873, in the *Biblioteca Catalana*, under the directorship of Marià Aguiló. It is in octavo and consists of eight volumes, the last of which was not published until 1905, after Aguiló's death. A typical product of the *Renaixença*, lacking any rigorous criteria and basically intended as a revival of one of our great classics, the beauty of the typography is outstanding. In 1904, the Hispanic Society of New York, which owns one of the three surviving copies of the original

Valencia edition—the copy without the decorative border—made a lavish facsimile limited edition. In the twenties, two editions of *Tirant* were undertaken which, for different reasons, are amongst the most outstanding yet produced. The Sant Feliu de Guixols edition, two volumes in folio, is a beautiful example of what is known as a "bibliophile's edition". Joan Givanel i Mas's notes and comments are aimed chiefly at correcting the shortcomings of the Aguiló edition and, generally speaking, they succeed. The decoration is in line with the modernist fashion and the lettering is particularly outstanding. *Editorial Barcino's* edition is completely different. Here, the idea was to make the book available to a wide public. Of a modest format—five volumes in duodecimo—the edition is, on the whole, well presented. The editing, introduction, notes and index are the work of J. M. Capdevila i Balanzó. The transcription and punctuation have been the basic model for all later editions, a fact which says a lot in its favour. From a present-day point of view, the most disputable aspect is the shortening of certain passages, on the grounds that "the majority of readers would not stand them".

No-one has yet attempted a critical edition of *Tirant*. The various editions that Martí de Riquer has been responsible for, both of the original version and of the 1511 Castilian translation, are the most important contribution yet

to the comprehension of the work and its authors. The studies with which he has introduced them or which he has published in various periodicals, sum up all that is at present known about them. To him we owe the definitive text, the introduction, the notes and the index of *Editorial Selecta's* edition, published in Barcelona in 1947 in the "Biblioteca Perenne" series—one quarto volume with a few simple illustrations—and *Editorial Seix i Barral's* 1969 edition, in the series "Biblioteca Breve de Bolsillo"—two volumes, of which, as well as the standard version, in octavo, a larger, quarto version was printed, on rag-paper. The 1969 edition, which contained certain corrections to the transcription of the earlier version, was republished the following year by the same publishers, with no change in the presentation. In 1979, it was published by *Editorial Ariel*, with a different presentation—one volume, but with the text photographically reproduced. Martí de Riquer, in collaboration with Maria Josepa Gallofré, was also responsible for the 1983 reproduction of the text by *Edicions 62* with *La Caixa* and the *Edicions 62/Ediciones Urbis* 1984 version, both in octavo but with differences in their typography and regarding earlier versions. This sums up Riquer's work as editor of the original text. As regards the Castilian translation, in 1947-49 he produced the first re-edition, in three volumes in folio, for the *Barcelona Associació de*



Bibliòfils. This admirably executed two-colour version in Gothic type was printed by S.A. Horta. I.E. Riquer was also responsible for the third re-edition, five volumes in octavo published in 1974 by *Espasa Calpe S.A.* and included in their "Clásicos castellanos" series. Between these two versions there was another, the second, prepared by Felicidad Buendía and published by *Editorial Aguilar*, as a single quarto volume in their series "Libros de caballerías españolas".

It is in the last twenty years —since Martí de Riquer's second edition, to give an approximate date— that the book's popularity has grown. Two new facsimile editions are available which offer those interested in the history of printing the opportunity to compare the typographical variations already mentioned. One of these is a simple, modest reproduction of the 1904 New York facsimile, with the light-hearted touch of attributing the novel *Tirant lo Blanch* to *Tirant lo Blanch* himself, simply adding an *h* to the title to form the name of the supposed author. The other, published by *Editorial Del Sénia al Segura* in 1978, is a reproduction of the copy in the Valencia University Library, completed with material from the Hispanic Society's edition. *Del Sénia al Segura* also published a palaeographic transcription of the novel in 1980 —three volumes in octavo— which follows the guide lines Martí de Riquer laid down regarding the punctuation. An-

other edition printed in the *País Valencià* was started in 1978 by *Edicions a la Tercera Branca*. It consists of four volumes in large format folio. The transcription of the text, which includes a great number of suggested corrections of earlier versions, is by Josep Palacios, and the illustrations are by Manuel Boix. There is a total of eight full-colour medallions and forty-eight etchings, some of them very large, which make it one of the most remarkable typographical productions ever undertaken in our country. Martorell and Galba's book has also been adapted for children and for the theatre, and there has been at least one reprinting of the "Els nostres clàssics" version, all of which goes to show that its public, who should be able to "consume it" in a natural, straightforward fashion, is growing continuously.

As we have seen, for a long time —centuries—, *Tirant* was published more frequently in translation than in its original language. In spite of its remarkable success at home, this appears once more to be the trend. Apart from recent re-editions of the sixteenth century Castilian text, in 1969 *Alianza Editorial* launched a new version of *Tirant* in modern Castilian, in two volumes in octavo signed by J. F. Vidal Jové, in their series "El libro de Bolsillo". Although not particularly good —Castilian-speakers are recommended to tackle the classic, and not simply for its period flavour—, one point in its

favour was the prologue by the fashionable South-American writer Mario Vargas Llosa, who, taking the novel from a new angle and with a modern sensitivity, managed to arouse the interest of large sectors of the public, both on the Peninsula and abroad. The first Romanian translation appeared in Bucharest in 1978, with an edited and therefore shortened text and notes by Oana Busuiocenu and a preface and chronological table by Andrei Ionescu, printed in two volumes in octavo. It is by far the ugliest edition of the book ever to be published or which will ever be published and its modesty is almost insulting, but this, on the other hand, shows the publisher's laudable intention to suit it to the widest possible market. The American edition, published in one volume by Schocken of New York in 1984 and later reproduced in England, translated and with an introduction by David Rosenthal, has also been shortened, as seems to be the trend. Also in 1984 a one volume quarto re-edition of Lelio de Manfredi's classic translation appeared in Italy, with an introduction by Giuseppe Sansone. Finally, the first Dutch edition was published in Amsterdam in 1987, translated by Bob de Nijs, also in a single quarto volume, and with an impeccable presentation. *Tirant* may not yet be a best-seller but, as we approach the five hundredth anniversary of its publication by the Valencian presses, it seems well on its way to being just that. ●