

TIRANT LO BLANC

A fifteenth-century Catalan novel of chivalry written by the Valencian knight Joanot Martorell. The first edition (Valencia, 1490) bears a second author's name, Martí Joan de Galba, but it is difficult to know exactly what he contributed. A second edition (Barcelona, 1497) shows that *Tirant* was a best-seller of the fifteenth century. The plot has three parts. From chapters 1 to 116 Martorell describes the hero's education, which begins with the story of Guillem de Vàroic, the highest model for a Christian knight (chapters 1–27). Guillem is a character borrowed from the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman poem *Guy de Warwicke*, translated into Catalan by Martorell himself. Vàroic defeats the Muslim invaders of Great Britain and, after refusing all rewards for this great achievement, becomes a hermit. Tirant meets him in a lonely land during his journey to the king of England's marriage feasts and takes advice from him. On his way home, our hero and his cousin Diafebus tell Guillem about Tirant's great deeds (chapters 28–98), which made him the finest living knight in the world. In order to consecrate his military skill to the struggle against the unbelievers, Tirant decides to rescue the island of Rhodes, besieged by the Turks. During his visit to Sicily, Tirant arranges for the marriage of the heiress of that country to a younger son of the king of France. There Tirant receives a letter from the emperor of Constantinople asking for help. With his landing on Greek shores in chapter 117, the second part of the novel begins. From there to chapter 297 Martorell builds the best of his narrative on a mixture of romantic and military episodes. The hero falls passionately in love with the emperor's young daughter, Carmesina, and at the same time becomes the captain of all the Christian armies in Greece. The successful love stories between Diafebus and Estefania and Hipòlit and the empress, and the erotic games planned by the princess's friend Plaerdemavida are some of the most famous episodes of that part of the novel. Then Martorell describes the great victory of Tirant against his Muslim enemies and Greek adversaries and also his defeat in bed with Carmesina. In the following chapters the celebration of Christian victory is darkened by new Turkish aggressions. On the other hand, the Viuda Reposada, Carmesina's wicked nurse, manages to convince Tirant that his beloved has a repulsive black lover. The hero, in deep despair, decides to expose himself to death on the battlefield. The ship bringing him there sinks and the third part of the novel starts (chapters 298–487). Tirant reaches North African shores and begins a new period of military achievements; in the end he converts the entire local Muslim population to Christianity. The African king Escariano becomes Tirant's close friend and is one of

the many allies that our hero gathers at the end of the book to rescue Constantinople from the Turks. Just when the emperor decides to make him his heir and the husband of Carmesina, Tirant dies of a bad cold, thus in turn causing his betrothed and her father to die of sorrow. Thanks to Tirant's deed, the new emperor rules a country free from Muslim danger, but he doesn't belong any more to the heroic lineage as his predecessors.

In spite of the variety of his sources (Ramon Llull, Muntaner, or Guillem de Torroella among Catalan writers, and John of Mandeville, Boccaccio, Petrarch, or Guido delle Colonne among Latin and Romance authors), Martorell was a very original literary creator who wrote an extraordinarily precise descriptive prose and endowed some of his characters with astonishing realistic features. But Martorell also filled his pages with long rhetorical digressions, often borrowed from other writers, which we assume were appreciated by contemporary readers.

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Bibliography

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TOLEDANO, EL See JIMÉNEZ DE RADA, RODRIGO

TOLEDO, CITY OF

The city of Toledo, the Toletum of pre-Roman origin, is situated almost at the geographical center of the Iberian Peninsula. Toledo rests on a granite hill surrounded on three sides by the Tajo River and, as such, until the modern age always enjoyed an ideal defensive position. Historically and culturally Toledo is one of the most important cities in Iberia. Early on it became an archiepiscopal see and, in the early Middle Ages, its archbishops became the primates of the Spains.

During the early Middle Ages, the Visigoths, who had invaded and conquered the Roman provinces of Hispania in the 470s, favored Toledo as their primary seat. Beginning in the sixth century, a distinguished series of archbishops of the see of Toledo presided over a succession of councils that issued important legislation for the early medieval Iberian Church. Toledo's greatest prosperity began under Islamic rule (712–1085), first as the seat of an emir and briefly after 1031 as the capital of an independent kingdom presided over by the Banū Dhū-l-Nūn, a Berber dy-