

500 YEARS OF “TIRANT LO BLANC”



THIS YEAR, THE CHIVALRIC NOVEL “TIRANT LO BLANC” CELEBRATES ITS FIVE HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY. CATALONIA IS THEREFORE GETTING READY TO HONOUR THE FIRST MODERN NOVEL IN THE CATALAN LANGUAGE.

 n 20 November 1490, in Valencia, the publisher Nicolau Spindeler completed the first edition of *Tirant lo Blanc*. This year, then, the knight Tirant and Joanot Martorell celebrate their anniversary on the Olympus of the classics, where the two arrived on the same day that it occurred to Cervantes, in the guise of a literary critic, to write, with reference to *Tirant lo Blanc*, "Give him to me, neighbour, for in him I shall have a treasure of delight and a mine of entertainment (...). Verily, neighbour, it is in its way the best book in the world." Cervantes included this dithyramb in the first part of *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, in the well known chapter 6, when the knight's library is examined before being burned down and when *Tirant lo Blanc* is one

fiat e non si faran felices ni d'agra ni
alegría négura feno q'voltra senyora
noy sia. e quey frecta a felle a
lea bodea putz alea i'posfelle no m
bague: pur trant. La felle e la ale
gría decau la pal i' bon nece. e la
tema mclada e de recel. e la
adde paraula deualia l'empa
doi ab carmina p la ma e pfa ti
rant qn aquella bota tena d'po
fite e di' ho al empador e acoll
lo virtuoso trát al empador e p
fent la piceffa dona del senoll en
terra: e ab veu humil e de mola
gracia acopanya a feu pncipi a
la frequent lupacio.

Capitol. c. xviij.

Suplicacio q̃a f̃irant al empador
Glosia que dela mae
stia voluta f̃erres fe
cepta et q̃o ñeueno co
nicioe te obtener aila
eterna gloria fruydo celestial
parayda qual os merexeto po
tetyr m̃olte virtutes e costumes
en lo qual ña b̃nificancia m̃ol
te q̃a enlita; e f̃ant de obse e de
elemento. E haucit ṽicet p̃m̃la
anyo en la m̃p̃olte gloria ab
triumpho donant lūm en lo m̃e
de cretissimū f̃enoy; ab lo ṽi
llora op̃acio fundado en fe; e
p̃ncipio caritat; p̃que p̃dece efer
rent dela f̃r̃m̃entora gloria. E p̃
co q̃a m̃a lita voluta a f̃abre to
ta gran f̃enicia euda breuē
m̃esta en aq̃uē m̃a fino lo be que
m̃esta. Eila m̃olte submissa ṽe

capitaneu i uns cavalls, per citen
aomeique foy per matrimoni
de la donjella flepanta de mace-
nizab lo me finglar gerra co-
te de femanjels contable man-
tallat de la ferra de la ferra de
tatal batari lofoco lo comen-
co Com fembanto matrimoni fien
fien fien de gria fima amo mai-
ment co no piocebsen fillu qui p-
de fien fien fien fien fien fien
co de la imperial coen co de
les parites amichu p amor bel-
e porco co la humanitate de
coen co molt bonu, co gran co-
fietio ala bonu, e natural co fa-
co de fien fien fien fien fien
bene, Co uns perllu que foy bo-
mo pallen en aillu fien molt
e maiorment co uns ven la guerra
Co amos les fien fien fien fien
fien fien fien fien fien fien fien
fracofen ab los fills fien fien
co fien fien fien fien fien fien
co que no fa perbeura en felici-
tate co uns fien fien fien fien
no fien fien fien fien fien fien
no fien fien fien fien fien fien
fien fien fien fien fien fien fien
fien fien fien fien fien fien fien

Capitol. cc. rr.
 Disposta feta per l'Imperador a
 Tirant.

I

Si se en vn tractat que se
 nece fa dient que neguna
 cosa no es mes carament
 compida com es en aque
 la que ab pregarico: e supplica
 cions se demana. E perco virtuos
 canra ami no es blasfem. que no

of the few books to be saved from the fire.

Joanot Martorell and Martí Joan de Galba's novel has always been a successful book with the public and critics. This is borne out by the many translations into other languages, which go back as far as the sixteenth century, as well as by the enthusiastic praise it has always received. To quote only one recent and eloquent testimony, that of Mario Vargas Llosa, in 1969, it is a "novel of chivalry, a fantastic, historical, military, social, erotic, psychological novel: all these things at once and none of them exclusively; no more nor less than reality. It is multiple, and allows different, conflicting readings, and it varies according to the viewpoint from which one chooses to put its chaos

in order (...). Martorell is the first of the God-supplanters –Fielding, Balzac, Dickens, Flaubert, Tolstoy, Joyce, Faulkner– who set out to create a ‘total reality’ in their novels, the earliest example of the all-powerful, aloof, omniscient, ubiquitous novelist”. Three hundred and fifty years separate Cervantes and Mario Vargas Llosa, but both provide testimonies of unreserved praise awarded to two heavyweights in the history of universal literature.

The pride of owning such a resounding classic as *Tirant lo Blanc*, the first modern novel, called for a celebration of the maximum dignity to mark its five-hundredth birthday, and the best way of celebrating was to organise a series of events and a campaign to stimulate awareness at all levels of Catalan society: a great *Tirant lo Blanc* celebration that opted mainly for educational initiatives and that set out to ensure that, from now on, Joanot Martorell’s work will be a familiar topic and a source of pride for all Catalans. The whole of Catalonia has been inundated with references to the novel, from university to primary school, from newspapers to radio, from further education to television programmes. And all with an unmistakable object in mind: to make sure that information on this classic of our literature gets to every corner of Catalonia and becomes familiar to everyone, each to the degree and on the level that most appeals to him.

The thinking behind the campaign is summed up in the slogan “Any del Tirant, any de la lectura” (Tirant year, reading year), reflected in a programme of events to be developed over a full year, from Sant Jordi 1990 to Sant Jordi 1991. This programme, in which the pedagogic slant is the principle driving

force, can be summed up under the following headings:

Scholarly, university level: “Symposion Tirant lo Blanc”, held from 19 to 24 November 1990, at the Reial Acadèmia de Bones Lletres, in Barcelona. The event was organised by the Barcelona universities and the Institució de les Lletres Catalanes, and taking part were some thirty experts in medieval literature whose work is recognized the world over. Also in November, two books were presented on the occasion of the “Symposion”: *Introducció a la lectura de Tirant lo Blanc*, by Martí de Riquer, and *Tirant lo Blanc: cinc-cents anys de crítica*, by Lola Badia and Anton Espader. April 1991 will see the publication of *Actes del Symposion Tirant lo Blanc*.

Primary and secondary education: A twofold contest of educational initiatives has been organised around *Tirant lo Blanc*: 1) Tirant in primary education (2nd level, general education) and 2) Tirant in secondary education (Technical training and secondary education). In both cases, it is a contest of experiences involving interdisciplinary projects, video productions, theatrical experiments and specific exercises. Participation has been encouraged as much as possible, because it seems obvious that it is in basic and secondary education that action is most needed and because the work carried out in the classroom is obviously of vital importance if we are to ensure that *Tirant lo Blanc* becomes a central reference point in our literature.

Similarly, two brief treatises have been prepared on *Tirant lo Blanc*, one for the second level of basic education and the other for secondary students. These treatises will be distributed to all the public and private schools in Catalonia.

At the same time, an educational video on *Tirant lo Blanc* is being prepared and will be distributed to all the resource centres serving education.

Presence of *Tirant lo Blanc* in all this year’s literary events. In keeping with the “Any del Tirant, any de la lectura” campaign, the commemoration will have a guaranteed presence in the “Catalan Book Week”, the “Children’s Book Week” and the “Liber” fair, amongst other events, as well as in literary contests such as the “Jocs Florals de Barcelona” and the “Premis Octubre de València”. Exhibitions, theatre, cinema, books, popular celebrations. From November onwards it was possible to visit a “Tirant lo Blanc” exhibition in Barcelona, organised in collaboration with Valencia City Council. A stage version of *Tirant lo Blanc* has also been prepared in Valencia –script by Maria Aurèlia Capmany and direction by Xicu Vidal–, opening on 20 November. The play will tour Valencia until the end of the year and will come to Catalonia in January 1991. Further plans include a film, in collaboration with TV3, and the possibility of organising festive and popular events on the occasion of Barcelona’s “Festa Major”, in September 1990. Finally, Catalan publishers are enthusiastically working on the preparation of various different versions and adaptations of *Tirant lo Blanc*. At this moment, the Catalan reading public can choose from a critical edition, four complete editions, half a dozen versions adapted to different educational levels, three stage versions and three illustrated versions.

The offer is broad and varied. Tirant at everyone’s fingertips. A source of pride for us and, undoubtedly, one of our literature’s most vigorous spokesmen. ■