



## CHARIOTS OF LADIES



# CHARIOTS OF LADIES



FRANCESC EIXIMENIS  
AND THE COURT CULTURE  
OF MEDIEVAL AND  
EARLY MODERN IBERIA

NURIA SILLERAS-FERNANDEZ

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*To the loving memory of my grandmother,*  
*Hermenegilda Alcoceba Lallana, ejemplo e inspiración*



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I have a very clear recollection of being fifteen years old and reading Francesc Eiximenis's *Exemples e faules* in my Catalan literature class while growing up in Barcelona. I did not like the book, but I did not forget it either. Back then I would never have imagined that many years later I would become a medievalist and write a book, in English, dealing with that same author. Later on, while working on my PhD in medieval history at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, focusing on the Crown of Aragon, and carrying out research on Queen Maria de Luna, it was impossible to escape the shadow of her counselor, Francesc Eiximenis, and his texts. Nevertheless, I did not conceive of this project until years later, and a continent away, when I was teaching in the history and literature departments of the University of California, Santa Cruz, and it was not until I took up my present position, as assistant professor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese at the University of Colorado at Boulder, that I began to focus on it in earnest.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| ACA    | Arxiu de la Corona d'Aragó                                       |
| AEM    | <i>Anuario de Estudios Medievales</i>                            |
| AGS    | Archivo General de Simancas                                      |
| AMV    | Arxiu Municipal de València                                      |
| ARP    | Arxiu del Reial Patrimoni  |
| ARV    | Arxiu del Regne de València                                      |
| BA     | Biblioteca da Ajuda  |
| BAM    | Biblioteca de l'Abadia de Montserrat                             |
| BC     | Biblioteca de Catalunya  |
| BCompl | Biblioteca Complutense   |
| BHUB   | Biblioteca Històrica de la Universitat de Barcelona              |
| BNE    | Biblioteca Nacional de España                                    |
| BNP    | Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal                                  |
| BRABLB | <i>Boletín de la Real Academia de Buenas Letras de Barcelona</i> |
| BRME   | Biblioteca del Real Monasterio de El Escorial                    |
| CD     | <i>Carro de las donas</i>  |
| CHCA   | Congreso de Historia de la Corona de Aragón                      |
| CODOIN | Colección de documentos inéditos de la Corona de Aragón          |
| CR     | cancillería real   |
| CSIC   | Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas                  |
| LD     | <i>Llibre de les dones</i>                                       |
| MR     | mestre racional  |
| RABLB  | <i>Real Academia de Buenas Letras de Barcelona</i>               |
| RAH    | Real Academia de la Historia                                     |



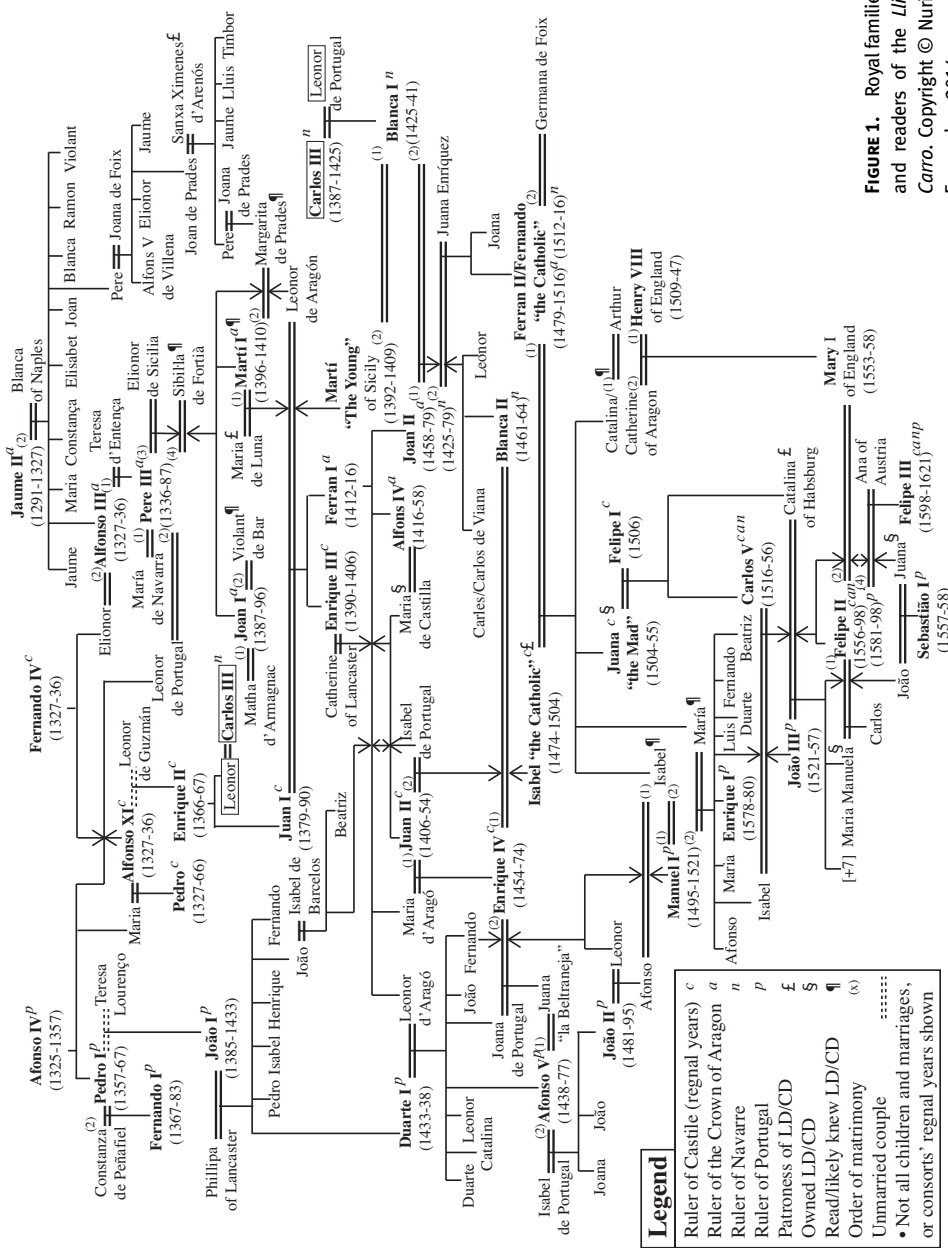


## NOTE ON STYLE, USAGE, AND TRANSLATIONS

This book discusses individuals from a range of cultures within the Iberian Peninsula and beyond, many of whom moved between cultures or were active in two or more linguistic traditions simultaneously. In order to refer to these individuals in a way that reflects both these cultural differences and the particular historical identities of the individuals themselves, I have chosen as a general rule to use the forms of their names that are consistent with the cultural/linguistic tradition or polity with which they or their contemporaries most often identified them or with which we most often identify them. Hence, the many “Marias” who are Castilian are referred to as “María,” and those who are Catalan or Portuguese as “Maria.” “Johns” appear variously as João (Portugal), Juan (Castile), or Joan (Crown of Aragon). Fernando de Antequera, who appears here as a ruler of the Crown of Aragon is referred to as “Ferran,” while his descendant, the husband of Isabel the Catholic, is referred to as “Fernando”—the name by which almost all readers will know him. Likewise, Isabel and Fernando the Catholic’s daughter, Catalina, is referred to here as “Catherine” for the period after her marriage, because in the English tradition she is famous as Henry VIII’s spurned wife, Catherine of Aragon. The names of popes, by contrast, are given in English. In some instances, it may appear that the choices I have made are arbitrary, and it is often difficult to pin these figures down to one linguistic identity, but I have been consistent in the case of each individual, which is the most important thing. Unless otherwise noted, all translations of Latin and peninsular languages in the text are my own; editorial exigencies have prevented the inclusion of the original language citations, but these can be easily found via the references. American spellings and usage have been preferred over British.



# CHARIOTS OF LADIES





# Introduction

## Eiximenis, His Patronesses, and Female Virtue in Late Medieval and Early Modern Iberia

Between the end of the fourteenth century and the first half of the sixteenth century the works of the Franciscan friar, moralist, theologian, and political theorist Francesc Eiximenis (c. 1327–1409) were read, translated, copied, and printed all over Europe. His works were read during his lifetime in manuscript form, and later in printed editions, most of which were translations and adaptations of books that were originally written by him in Catalan and, less frequently, in Latin. One hundred and fifty-one manuscripts of his works are extant, thirty-three of which are translations to Castilian (Spanish), Aragonese, Flemish, French, and Latin.<sup>1</sup> With the dissemination of the printing press in the late fifteenth century Eiximenis's prestige only grew. Twenty printed editions of his books were produced between 1478 and 1542, including originals and translations.<sup>2</sup> Eiximenis's reputation was such that when the first printing press was established at Geneva in 1478, the first book produced on it was a French translation of his most popular work, the *Llibre dels àngels* (*Book of Angels*), while in Granada in 1496, only four years after the fall of the Muslim emirate to the “Catholic

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1. See the inventory of his manuscripts and incunabula in Puig i Oliver et al., “Catàleg dels manuscrits”; Massó i Torrents, “Les obres”; and Viera, “Más sobre manuscritos.”

2. Eiximenis, *Art de predicació*, xxv; Wittlin, introduction to Eiximenis, *De Sant Miquel Arcàngel*, 7.

Kings,” a Spanish translation of his *Vida de Jesucrist* (*Life of Jesus Christ*) inaugurated the printing press there.<sup>3</sup> None other than Hernando de Talavera, the archbishop of Granada and Queen Isabel the Catholic’s confessor, had promoted its publication.<sup>4</sup> Eiximenis’s works were also in many private book collections. For instance, in Valencia—his home for most of his life—he was the most popular author in the fifteenth century; only the Bible appears more frequently than his works in library inventories.<sup>5</sup>

During his own lifetime Eiximenis was a very influential cleric, who had strong connections with the royal house of the Crown of Aragon—the patrimonial aggregate that, together with Castile, ruled over most of the Iberian Peninsula and much of the western Mediterranean. In his time the Crown of Aragon was a dynastic federation consisting of the Principality of Catalonia, the Kingdoms of Aragon and Valencia, as well as islands and territories scattered across the Mediterranean, including the Kingdoms of Mallorca, Sardinia, Corsica, and Sicily—the latter having been ruled through most of the previous century by a cadet branch of the same house.<sup>6</sup>

Eiximenis was no ordinary friar. He was a religious reformer, and an energetic proponent of the Observance, a reform movement that would transform the Franciscan order. He was also both a royal counselor and a political theorist—an individual who was very much interested both in the day-to-day running of government and in the theories and principles that underlay it. Finally, he was a prolific popular moralist, whose works included treatises on feminine piety and virtue that attracted an important following among aristocrats of both genders—a readership that he actively courted as patrons in order to better disseminate his edificatory agenda. During his lifetime his works were read for the most part in the Crown of Aragon, but soon after his death they became even more influential and esteemed in other royal and aristocratic courts in the peninsula: first in Castile, then Portugal, and finally, across western Europe. His most avid readers included queens and women of

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3. Fernández Martín, *La real imprenta*; and Martín Abad, “Apunte brevísimo.”

4. The work was titled *Vita Christi*, and only the first of the two volumes planned was published. The final lines read: “This first volume of *The Life of Christ* of Brother Francisco Ximénez was finished and printed in the great and renowned city of Granada on the last day of the month of April 1496 by Meynardo Ungut and Johannes de Nuremberga, Germans, by the order of and at the expense of the most very reverent lord Don Hernando de Talavera, first Archbishop of the Holy Church in this, the said city of Granada.” BNE: Inc. 1126, Eiximenis/Talavera, *Vita Christi*, f. 170v.

5. Eiximenis, *Regiment de la cosa pública*, 29; Berger, *Libro y lectura*, 380–81.

6. For historical context, see Bisson, *The Medieval Crown*; Hillgarth, *The Spanish Kingdoms*; and Menéndez Pidal ed., *Historia de España*. The Crown of Aragon’s political structure reflects what Horden and Purcell have identified as Mediterranean characteristics: it was a fragmented aggregate of diverse, independent-yet-interrelated, political, economic, and cultural units, largely defined by their relationship to the sea. Horden and Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea*, 10–15.

the upper nobility, courtiers, Franciscans, nuns, religious reformers who were interested in spirituality, and also merchants and artisans. Given the number of editions that some of his works went through, it would be no exaggeration to say that they constituted late medieval “best sellers.” The personal prestige he carried at the royal court, together with the success of the Observant movement, of which he was seen as a forerunner and spokesman, established Eiximenis’s writings within a complex network of readers who owned, read, and recommended his manuscripts to be copied, and, in later centuries, to be printed.<sup>7</sup> The rulers that supported him during his lifetime—Pere the Ceremonious, Elionor of Sicily, and their two sons, Joan I and Martí I, together with the latter’s wives, Matha d’Armagnac, Violant de Bar, and Maria de Luna—both read his works avidly and promoted them among the noblemen and ladies-in-waiting of the court, as well as among their peers, relations, friends, and functionaries. Eiximenis’s greatest preoccupation was with the practice of Christian virtue, and most of his books are essentially guides to proper behavior; but out of this concern emerges also a strong focus on politics and on spirituality. Thus, he enjoined the kings and queens of this time to behave righteously, but not merely for virtue’s own sake or for the good of their souls. He understood the connection between political rulership and moral performance, and so he not only strove to inculcate them with virtue, but also taught them how to conceal their own particular moral defects from their subjects, in order to mitigate popular anxieties that the gulf between monarchical ideal and human reality might provoke.

Nevertheless, few scholars today read Eiximenis’s work, and those who do tend to be specialists in Catalan or Iberian literature and history. As a consequence, few of Eiximenis’s texts are available in modern scholarly editions. Some exist only as incunabula, and have not been printed in full since the sixteenth century. Others are extant only in manuscript form, and others have been lost altogether.<sup>8</sup> Thus, despite his tremendous success in his own time and the century and a half that followed, he has become a rather obscure figure in the literary-historical landscape. Only now are Iberianists discovering Eiximenis and coming to realize that one must take into account his influence to fully understand the complex picture of late medieval and early modern Iberian literature and culture. Such are the paradoxes of our discipline, and the factors that contribute to scholars’ elaboration of literary

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7. The borrowing of books among the elite is documented in the case of the Crown of Aragon by many letters from the royal chancery of the Crown of Aragon; see Rubió i Lluch, *Documents*.

8. The Institut de Llengua i Cultura Catalana (Section Francesc Eiximenis) of the Universitat de Girona is undertaking the task of editing his works. There is also an English anthology of his texts: Renedo and Guixeras, *Francesc Eiximenis*.

canon.<sup>9</sup> That said, several scholars have devoted most or a significant part of their careers to the study of Eiximenis's works, including Andrés Ivars and Martí de Barcelona (both early twentieth-century Franciscans), and more recently, North American academics, including Curt Wittlin, David Viera, and Jill Webster, and Catalan and Valencian scholars, such as Martí de Riquer, Albert Hauf, Xavier Renedo, Lluís Brines, Sadurní Martí, and Carmen Clau-sell—just to cite a few of the most prominent.<sup>10</sup> The present book—made possible by the work of all of these scholars—represents a new turn in the study of Eiximenis and his oeuvre, placing it in a peninsular and continental context, and examining the vectors by which it was disseminated and the forces and factors that transformed it.

This book is not, however, an exercise in rehabilitating the reputation of a now-obscure writer—Eiximenis himself, whatever his merits or failings as a literary figure, is secondary to the project. *Chariots of Ladies: Francesc Eiximenis and the Court Culture of Medieval and Early Modern Iberia* analyzes models of virtue and female agency current among women, and, more specifically, queens and noblewomen, in the Iberian Peninsula from the fourteenth to the sixteenth century, as evidenced through the medium of particular works of Eiximenis that I would argue contributed to the creation of a discourse relating to the codification of what was seen by contemporaries as “proper” feminine behavior. His moral writings functioned as a counterpoint to the coquettish culture of late medieval French courtly literature that was established in the Crown of Aragon in the late fourteenth century by Joan I (r. 1387–96) and his queen, Violant de Bar, and to the skeptical and classically inspired works of contemporaries, like Joan I's secretary, Bernat Metge, whose *Lo somni* (*The Dream*) marked a move toward humanism.<sup>11</sup>

This book also looks at how and why certain texts on practical morality and gender became accepted among the noble elite. Several of Eiximenis's works were popular in many or all of the medieval Iberian kingdoms—in particular, the Crowns of Aragon, Castile, and Portugal—and these works were typically translated from Catalan into Castilian. Much as Peter Burke proposed that a work like Castiglione's *Il cortegiano* (*The Book of the Courtier*) was a factor in the “Europeanization of Europe,” I would contend that the dissemination of Eiximenis's writings was a factor in the “Iberianization of Iberia” and, concretely, in a common conceptualization of gender and

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9. See Whinnom, “Spanish Literary Historiography”; Silleras-Fernandez, “Paradoxes humanistes.”

10. See “Works Cited” at the end of this book.

11. See Cortijo Ocaña, “Women's Role”; Cortijo Ocaña, *La evolución genérica*, 20–27; and Silleras-Fernandez, “Paradoxes humanistes.”

the place of women in government.<sup>12</sup> The *Llibre de les dones*, published in Castilian in print in 1542, was widely read and available in several languages through the sixteenth century; its ideas reflected fundamental concerns of early modern court life in the peninsula.

As Edward Said put it, “The history of all cultures is the history of cultural borrowing,” and this borrowing shaped the polysystemic and polyglossic literary culture of medieval Iberia—one in which several languages and traditions were in continual contact and exercised a profound influence over each other. “Medieval Iberian literature” is nothing less than an amalgamation of the various Romance literary and cultural traditions (Castilian/Spanish, Catalan/Valencian/Mallorcan, Occitan, Aragonese, and Galician/Portuguese), together with those of Latin, Hebrew, and Arabic.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, in addition to these indigenous currents, one must also consider the extrapeninsular traditions originating in continental Europe and across the Mediterranean that also influenced the conceptualization and production of literature in this era.<sup>14</sup> Without denying the particularities of each of the native traditions, one might conceive of this borrowing as a symptom of the hybrid nature of culture.<sup>15</sup> Looking at some of Eiximenis’s texts, and at how they traveled, and were translated, transformed, and received, may help us understand the discursive strategies that developed in this period regarding gender roles and the place of women in society and politics, and how these evolved within a brief two centuries. Eiximenis’s works function in a Kristevian fashion, as intertexts in a much larger grid of cultural practices; they can be understood as focalizing outlets in a network of texts discussing spirituality and women and their role in society, while simultaneously they have an intertextual value rooted in their relationships with other texts from the past, Eiximenis’s present, and the future.<sup>16</sup>

This work concentrates primarily on two of Eiximenis’s treatises: the *Llibre de les dones* (*Book of Women*) and the *Scala Dei*, or *Tractat de la contemplació* (*Ladder to God*, or *Treatise on Contemplation*), and the individual women to whom these were dedicated, and for whom they were written or translated. Three iterations of the *Llibre de les dones* are examined, both in terms of their content and in relation to other works of the same genre produced during the same period. It appears clear to me that this book, together with Eiximenis’s *Scala Dei*, became a blueprint for female virtue in the royal court of

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12. See Burke, *The Fortunes of the Courtier*, 2.

13. Said, *Culture and Imperialism*; Dagenais, “Medieval Spanish Literature,” 42.

14. Kinoshita, “Medieval Mediterranean Literature.”

15. Bhabha, “Cultural Diversity,” 155–57.

16. Kristeva, *Séméiotike*, 164.

the Crown of Aragon under Maria de Luna, and her fifteenth-century successors. In 1469, thanks to the marriage of Fernando II of Aragon and Isabel I of Castile, who together ascended the throne of Castile in 1474 and that of Aragon in 1479 (and were known from 1496 as the “Catholic Kings”), this book entered the literary milieu of the Castilian court, where it most likely served as a model for the education of their four daughters. Isabel could not read the work in its original Catalan, so she commissioned a Spanish translation as *El libro de las donas* (*The Book of Women*). In this new textual incarnation, Eiximenis’s work was recast for a new readership living within a distinct cultural-linguistic environment. Half a century later, Catalina of Habsburg, Isabel the Catholic’s granddaughter and the sister of Emperor Carlos V (ruler of Spain, 1516–56), was offered a new translation. She had become queen of Portugal, and one of her chaplains offered her the book so that she could adopt the same model of female virtue that had inspired her illustrious grandmother and had been used to educate her own mother, Queen Juana “the Mad” (r. 1504–55). However, by 1542 times had changed. A new “Kingdom of Spain” was emerging out of the multiplicity of medieval Iberian kingdoms, and had become the heart of a massive imperial power under Carlos V, king in Spain and Holy Roman Emperor (1519–56). Thus, the book was transformed again, as *Carro de las donas* (*The Chariot of Women*), adding Isabel the Catholic and other contemporary or near-contemporary nobles as exemplary characters, editing out the parts that were no longer considered relevant or appropriate for this new age, and including the ideas of another illustrious Valencian writer, Joan Lluís Vives.<sup>17</sup> Now set in type, it was able to reach a far wider audience than earlier manuscript editions had, and it soon circulated widely in Iberian courts and beyond.

Thus, the *Llibre de les dones*, in its three iterations (*Llibre de les dones*, *Libro de las donas*, *Carro de las donas*), along with the *Scala Dei*, constitutes an excellent lens for observing and analyzing the evolution of gender discourse, female literary stereotypes, queenship, piety and devotion, and the role of translation in the Iberian Peninsula and beyond, from the fourteenth through the sixteenth century. Simultaneously, the study of these books provides a basis for exploring the relationships between text, theory, and practice, and the interaction between the discourses of monarchy, counsel, and gender. At bottom, the *Llibre de les dones* is a conduct book that explains the nature of women in order to help them overcome their limitations, but it is one that pushes women’s involvement in piety, devotion, and oration a step beyond

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17. *LD*, 1:21; hereafter *LD*. For an edition of the *Carro*, see Clausell Nàcher, *Carro de las donas*.

most other didactic texts. In general, like other books dedicated to women, it had a practical function: that of preparing actual women, like the queens noted above, for the social, political, and moral challenges that they would face in real life.

In Eiximenis's own words, the *Llibre de les dones* is "all about women" (*tot de dones*), but is intended, nevertheless, to serve as a guide for Christians in general, both male and female.<sup>18</sup> In the Middle Ages, the patriarchal conception of power and privilege, anxieties regarding sexual control, and issues relating to the body and gender provoked varying degrees of angst in male writers, and particularly religious authors. Eiximenis was no exception.<sup>19</sup> His aim here was to present an exposition of the female virtues and vices, and how to mitigate the latter using the teachings of the Bible and the opinions of the fathers and doctors of the church. Eiximenis was driven by a paradox: if God had created women as fundamentally good beings, how could Eve have become Satan's agent?<sup>20</sup>

## The Women behind the Book

On the other hand, Eiximenis composed the *Llibre de les dones* under particular circumstances and for a specific patroness, Sanxa Ximenis d'Arenós, Countess of Prades—a lady of the upper nobility who was having serious marital problems, and who in 1385 had effectively separated from her husband. Some years later, probably in 1397, Eiximenis combined parts of the book he had written for Sanxa with fresh material, in order to offer a small devotional book to Maria de Luna, the new queen of the Crown of Aragon. This work, known as the *Scala Dei*, or *Tractat de la contemplació*, provides fascinating insight into the model of queenship imagined by Eiximenis, and confirms him as a pioneering proponent of a new type of devotion, linked to the Franciscan Observance, as well as the *devotio moderna*, that had begun to gel precisely at this time.<sup>21</sup> This book, which has not yet been the subject of a critical edition, made its way from the Crown of Aragon to Castile, where

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18. *LD*, 1:8.

19. Weissberger and Breitenberg each invoked Freud's definition of anxiety as a "particular state of expecting the danger or preparing for it, even though it may be an unknown one," as the basis for the proposition that the literature produced during the reigns of Isabel the Catholic and Elizabeth I served a therapeutic function to mitigate "the threat that queenship represents to the patriarchal status quo." Weissberger, *Isabel Rules*, xv.

20. Viera and Piqué, *La dona en Francesc Eiximenis*, 5; Viera and Piqué, "Women in the *Crestià*," 96–97; Viera, "Francesc Eiximenis on Women."

21. There is a partial and modernized edition of the *Scala Dei*: Eiximenis, *Scala Dei: Devocionari de la reina Maria*. See also Baraut, "L'Exercitatorio de la vida spiritual," 234–35. Unlike some other scholars,

it came to be avidly read and highly esteemed among the clerical entourage of Isabel the Catholic. Adapted, translated, or simply excerpted, it was in this way that Eiximenis's thought was quickly woven into Castilian literary culture. The profound interrelation of the Castilian and Lusitanian dynasties provided for the subsequent transmission of the friar's ideas to Portugal.

Both the *Scala Dei* and the *Llibre de les dones* provide a window into the process of cultural transmission and the roles of patronage and translation in late medieval and early modern European literature. Further, the literary longevity of the *Llibre de les dones* suggests that the models of womanhood it presents transcended temporal and cultural specificities. On the other hand, tracing the transformation of this work allows us to grasp the variations in the concept of womanhood that marked the transition from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance, both across time and cultures. The four women behind these books—one countess, Sanxa Ximenis d'Arenós, and three queens: Maria de Luna, Isabel the Catholic, and Catalina of Habsburg—were much more than “implied readers”; they deliberately used to their advantage the model proposed by Eiximenis and his early modern translators/adapters as they fashioned themselves as female rulers. This is a fact reflected in their correspondence and their public involvement in politics, the court, and government, in which their feminine epistolary voices reflect and surpass the models and modalities recommended by Eiximenis and his contemporaries. For these authors, proper female conduct was both an ideological and an aesthetic posture.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, these four women were all informed by and shared in similar models of virtue, proper female behavior, and rulership, which together contributed to their *virtus politica* (political virtue). In an age when women were discouraged from being active political agents and authorities, they managed successful political careers that were not challenged during their lifetimes, nor did their political careers taint their popular and historical reputations. This model of female comportment was represented in the sets of books that they owned, that were dedicated to them, and that they most likely read.

When a medieval author, like Eiximenis, dedicated a book to someone in particular—a common conceit in this era—there was always a reason behind it, and frequently it was a desire on the part of the writer to insinuate himself into the recipient's network of patronage and protection—hence, the importance of historicizing the relationship between the author (or translator/adapter, as

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I consider Francesc Eiximenis a precursor of the Observant Franciscans and a link to the *Devotio moderna* in the Crown of Aragon. See Hauf, *D'Eiximenis a Sor Isabel*, 46–47.

22. Goldsmith, *Writing the Female Voice*, vii; Cherewatuk and Wiethaus, *Dear Sister*, 4.



the case may be) and the women to whom each of these works was dedicated, as well as the audiences each book found. Beyond this, this study seeks to problematize the relationship between theory and practice in the didactic context by analyzing the identities of the readers of these books in terms of the cultural, social, and political environments in which they moved. A key factor in such relationships was *largesse*—munificence had been established by Aristotle as one of the features of the ideal man, and in the patronage-driven socioeconomic environment of the Middle Ages it had been cemented as a critical characteristic of the nobility.<sup>23</sup> Not only was *largesse* held up as an aristocratic quality in itself, but literary patronage functioned on a clear, if unmentioned, principle of *quid pro quo*. A writer whose work praised and enhanced the reputation of a powerful individual felt entitled to compensation and reward. Indeed, in his moralizing essays, Eiximenis himself frequently invokes the responsibility of the prince to exercise such openhandedness. In Eiximenis's world there were also women who controlled considerable wealth, or had influence over men who did, and these powerful women also wanted to exhibit the generosity that marked their class. Moreover, a book constituted a permanent memorial to the patron, one that would not diminish with time, and would convey their reputation both to their contemporary peers and to generations to come.<sup>24</sup> As a consequence the production of this literature was marked by the tensions between the agendas of authors, patrons, and readers—a tension that is particularly clear in the case of didactic literature written by men but aimed at women. The obvious tension between pedagogical models that limited female agency and denied political power, and reality, where women including countesses, like Sanxa Ximenis d'Arenós, and queens, like Maria de Luna, Isabel the Catholic, Catalina of Habsburg, and many others, had an important role in government, is explored in this book.

## Didactic/Conduct Literature: Contextualizing Female Virtue

There was a proliferation of didactic literature—also called “conduct” and “courtesy” literature—across the Europe of the late Middle Ages, aimed at both women and men. A didactic text is intended to teach, advise, edify, and

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23. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, IV:83 and 89.

24. Sanxa still appears as a dedicatory figure in the first Castilian translations of the work (those made either for Isabel the Catholic or during her time), and was excised by the translator/author of 1542, who makes reference only to Catalina, queen of Portugal, in this context. *Carro de las donas*, 1:127–47; hereafter *CD*.

moderate the reader's behavior.<sup>25</sup> In other words, it relates to character. A conduct book, on the other hand, represents a broader category relating to either action and appearances or internal qualities. Some conduct books were also, in effect, courtesy books, and this is natural, given that outward appearances and inner character were seen as being related and mutually indicative. Good behavior was seen as proof of good character.<sup>26</sup> The war, famine, and plague of the mid-fourteenth century heralded an age of tremendous crisis and a radical reordering of social and economic relations. Conduct books became important at this time because they served to systematize social and religious codes of behavior in a period of great instability and turmoil, in terms of theology, religious devotion, social structure, and identity, and those anxieties show in the texts.<sup>27</sup> These works were already extremely popular and circulated widely in manuscript form. When the printing press was introduced, the genre exploded and reached a much wider audience.

The didactic tradition was quite diverse and included many other genres in addition to conduct and courtesy books, such as "mirrors of princes and princesses," sermons, proverbs, letters, fables, collections of exempla, moralizing tales, and treatises on vices and virtues.<sup>28</sup> Yet there was not a clear distinction between genres, and moral conduct books also incorporated spiritual and devotional elements. Moreover, their authors were also concerned with entertaining their readers and with the aesthetic value of their works.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, despite the diversity, importance, popularity, and diffusion of these genres, and notwithstanding the evident value that contemporary patrons and readers placed on them, these texts have been almost entirely excluded from the literary canon, and are typically relegated to the category of "minor genres." However, it is precisely these types of texts that allow us to gauge the connection between literary texts and their practical applications—obviously an important measure of the impact of literary works. These texts can also help us to distinguish between those ideas and mores that were prescriptive and those that were descriptive. As will be seen in the course of the present work, the texts of Eiximenis and those he inspired were intended to be prescriptive and had the specific aim of reforming and refining readers' behavior, but in fact, readers regarded them as descriptive and consumed and

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25. Feros Ruys, "Introduction," 5. For an introduction to medieval didactic literature in the Spanish context, see Haro Cortés, *Literatura de castigos*.

26. Dronzek, "Gendered Theories," 137.

27. Ashley and Clark, Introduction, x.

28. Regarding the treatises of virtues and vices, see Newhauser, *The Treatise on Vices*, passim; and Newhauser, *The Seven Deadly Sins*, 1–17.

29. Weber, "Religious Literature," 150.

digested them in different ways. For example, Eiximenis tailored his tone and content to the status and position of his intended audience—his patronesses and their circles; but his actual readership—which came to be much wider than he could ever have imagined—interpreted his work according to their own various proclivities.

This was the way this type of literature tended to be read, and one can observe the same disjuncture in the work of contemporaries, like Christine de Pizan. She dedicated her *Livre des trois vertus* (*Book of Three Virtues*) specifically to Isabeau de Bavaria, queen of France, but it enjoyed a far broader, and less refined, reading public.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, Eiximenis's texts were appropriated and transformed by his translators and adapters, who had their own agendas, and their own intended audiences, thus introducing another level of ambiguity as a consequence of their production.

Didactic literature, and particularly that devoted to women, tended to be very practical, and was rooted in certain concrete traditions. Medieval and early modern ideas about gender and virtue were based, on the one hand, on biblical imagery and exegesis and, on the other, on Christianized versions of classical philosophy and natural science (particularly medical theory). Among the basic assumptions relating to anatomy and physiology that were current among contemporary scholars was the belief in a binary opposition in which men were both different from and superior to women. Aristotle conceived of men as being intellectually and morally superior to women, who were seen as “incomplete men”—a proposition he was confident could be proven by observing the male gender in nature. Hence, he concluded, the will of nature was that men should dominate women.<sup>31</sup> This position was Christianized by theologians such as Thomas Aquinas, who tempered it by noting that women could not be dismissed as a defective species—given that they had been created by God—but that their role was secondary, and therefore, they had to be subject to male control.<sup>32</sup> Likewise, in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, virtue emerges out of the equilibrium—the Golden Mean—between two opposites. For instance, the characterization of women as less rational than men meant that in order to advance in a male-dominated world, they

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30. Krueger, “‘Nouvelles choses.’”

31. Further proof of male superiority can be seen in the importance given to the male in reproduction. Semen—the masculine essence—was seen as active, whereas the female's role was seen as passive. Women merely provided the material and vessel that facilitated the reproductive process. Following Avicenna's revision of Aristotle, Albertus Magnus ceded women an active role in reproduction, but one that was subsidiary to the male. See Cadden, *Meanings of Sex Difference*, 21–26.

32. “Women is by nature subject to Man, because in Man there is by nature a greater abundance of the discretion of reason.” Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 92, a. 1. Cf. Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III, q. 32, “De conceptione Christina quod activum principium.”

had to either adhere to a very particular model of virtuous womanhood or give up most aspects of their gender in order to become more masculine, and therefore, more rational. As Judith Butler has noted, gender is performative: “the body becomes its gender through a series of acts which are renewed, revised, and consolidated through time,” and “it is real only to the extent that it is performed.”<sup>33</sup> Likewise, because males were seen as superior, in order to become virtuous, medieval women could strive to become more masculine (which is to say, rational) by curtailing their femininity, and all that this implied. They had to become less woman-like. Indeed, the etymological root of “virtue,” the Latin *virtus*, is *vir*, or “man”; “virtue” signified “manliness,” or “courage.”

Nevertheless, virtue was not held to be the exclusive realm of men—this was hardly possible within a Christian tradition that emphasized the superlative virtue of certain women, notably the Virgin Mary. If women could be virtuous, however, it was not in the same way as men. Virtue, even more than gender, is performative and constructed, and emerges out of repetition and expectations—and the expectations for women were distinct from those for men. In this era, virtue was understood to be established and reinforced through the repetition of righteous and honorable acts, and was reflected in proper behavior and proper appearance. As Thomas Aquinas put it, virtue is not a quality, but a “habit” (*habitus*): “a habit perfecting man so he may act well”—this is how virtue was understood in the Latin reading of Aristotle’s *Ethics*.<sup>34</sup> Or, as the sociologist and critic Pierre Bourdieu proposed much later, in the 1980s, “habitus” is a sort of socialized norm or tendency that guides thinking and behavior, it is delimited in a field, and changes over time. It is, in his words, “a durable, transposable system of definitions” assimilated initially by children as a result of the conscious and unconscious practices of their families.<sup>35</sup>

Medieval proper behavior and character were rooted in the model of the four cardinal virtues (moral and human), which included temperance, courage, justice, and wisdom (or prudence, temperance, fortitude, and justice), although some authors also included magnanimity, humility, and patience as

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33. Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution,” 523 and 527. Her ideas on performativity are further developed in her book *Gender Trouble*.

34. Pansters, *Franciscan Virtue*, 26, 29, and 32 (citation).

35. Bourdieu and Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 134. As Zander Navarro, one of his interpreters, put it, “[Habit] designates not only the foundational basis of practices but also the analytical objectives of circumventing the impasse versus objectivism.” Navarro, “In Search of a Cultural Interpretation,” 16.

virtues.<sup>36</sup> Of course, this was not a medieval novelty—the four virtues came from the Greek and Roman philosophical tradition. Plato mentions the cardinal virtues in *The Republic*, and Saint Augustine in his Platonism imagined them to be manifest in heaven as modes of loving God.<sup>37</sup> Plato's disciple Aristotle developed his own theory, which he lays out in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and in his *Politics*, works that were highly respected in the Middle Ages, and were translated into Latin around 1246–47 and 1265, respectively.<sup>38</sup> Other influential Hellenistic ideas regarding virtue include Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*, or *Education of Cyrus*, in which the King of Persia was presented as a model of self-control, modesty, and decorum. Similarly, Cicero's *De officiis* (*On Duties*) emphasizes decorum—understood as self-control and self-consciousness—as the quality that enables men to eschew and avoid “effeminate” ways.<sup>39</sup>

A key innovation of Christianity vis-à-vis the classical position was to transform virtues from abstract moral values into instruments of salvation—a concept completely foreign to Aristotle's thought. Another novelty was the addition to the canonical cardinal virtues of specifically Christian theological virtues (biblical and divine): faith, hope, and charity (*fides*, *spes*, and *caritas*). But virtues were not merely religious in orientation; they were also intrinsic to the notion of legitimate political power, whether exercised by men or women.<sup>40</sup> However, there was no precise or “orthodox” definition of rulerly virtue; hence, the differences in various *specula principum* (mirrors of princes), which tended to be composed with the specific circumstances of a particular court in mind, to be read within a precise circle of patronage and clientele, and to be dedicated to a particular king, queen, prince, or princess. Finally, in the later Middle Ages, a new concept of virtue developed: the idea of *virtus politica*, or “political virtue,” which was also particularly relevant to rulers.<sup>41</sup> By the thirteenth century, the category of *virtus politica* was understood to have three distinct meanings. It functioned at times as a synonym for the cardinal virtues; it was used generically to refer to virtues in general; and, in some contexts, it was comprehended as referring to virtues relating specifi-

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36. Pansters, *Franciscan Virtue*, 33.

37. Lombard, *Sententiae*, II:188–89 (III.XXXIII.3); Augustine, *De Trinitate*, XIX, 9 (50A, 438–39).

38. Aristotle's virtues included courage, temperance, liberality, magnanimity, pride, sincerity, distributive justice, corrective justice, and equity. Pansters, *Franciscan Virtue*, 9 n. 31. See also Buffon, “The Structure of the Soul,” 14.

39. See Burke, *The Fortunes of the Courtier*, 11.

40. Bejczy and Nederman, *Princely Virtues*, 4.

41. The term does not appear in classical Latin and patristic sources, except for Macrobius's commentary on the *Somnium Scipionis*. From the twelfth century some hagiographies included the political virtues as described by Macrobius. See Bejczy, “The Concept of Political Virtue,” 9.

cally to politics.<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, the principal Franciscan virtues were charity, obedience, goodness, truth, faith, humility, joy, poverty, penance, and peace.<sup>43</sup>

Such was the intellectual landscape of virtue at the time that Eiximenis wrote his *Llibre de les dones* and the *Scala Dei*. For women to establish a recognized claim to the possession or embodiment of virtue was a sort of first step toward their incorporation into society as full members, and queens—as the correspondence of Maria de Luna, Isabel the Catholic, and Catalina of Habsburg shows—were particularly aware of this fact. It was in the late Middle Ages that ideas of feminine virtue, the didactic genre, and the medium of the book converged to teach women how to overcome vice and to approach God. With the novel element of female patronage of these works, individuals, both secular and religious, were able to lay claim to virtue and, therefore, to take on a more active role in society and politics. In order to understand how actual women, like those for whom Eiximenis's books were written, or to whom they were dedicated and translated—Sanxa Ximenis d'Arenós, Maria de Luna, Isabel the Catholic, and Catalina of Habsburg—received these prescriptions and went on to remodel them, and how contemporaries understood these works, it is necessary to understand their historical context. Advice to kings was not given lightly in the Middle Ages, and queens and aristocratic women were also regarded as eminences; what was said to them and how they reacted to it were matters of great importance. Books of counsel and advice were a well-established and respected genre in the Middle Ages and early modern period; they provided a legitimate and acceptable manner of criticizing the most powerful elements of society through appeal to scripture and the use of exempla and figures drawn from the Bible, history, and literature that could be applied as parables to contemporary situations and controversies.

This book was inspired by certain themes that began to draw my interest while I was writing my first monograph, *Power, Piety, and Patronage in Late Medieval Queenship: Maria de Luna* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). That book was a study of medieval queenship, an examination of the nature and role of feminine authority and power and the monarchy in the late Middle Ages. Based primarily on archival documentation, it focused on the life and career of the countess and magnate Maria de Luna, who in 1396

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42. Bejczy, "The Concept of Political Virtue," 15; Skinner, *Visions of Politics*; and Viroli, *From Politics to Reason of State*.

43. Pansters, *Franciscan Virtue*, 45.

ascended unexpectedly to the throne of the Crown of Aragon as queen consort of Martí I (1396–1410), and served as his lieutenant general (second in command) until her death in 1406. *Power, Piety, and Patronage* analyzed the career of Maria de Luna from a variety of approaches, uncovering the networks of patronage that sustained and reinforced her authority, and thereby demonstrated that “political” actions in the Middle Ages cannot be understood as unrelated to religious, cultural, and familial activities. The “political” was merely one dimension of the broader activities of the royal or queenly court. *Chariots of Ladies*, on the other hand, turns to cultural history, and specifically to issues of cultural production in the context of the royal court, especially the matter of female patronage of feminine conduct literature, with an eye to both audience response and authorial intentionality. The models of womanly virtue that Eiximenis proposed may initially have been intended for his specific patronesses, and the narrow readership of the courtly aristocracy, but they soon took on a life of their own. And, whereas a man may have formulated them, it was largely thanks to networks of female patrons and readers—queens, noblewomen, and nuns—that they owe both their longevity and their wide geocultural dissemination. Indeed, the interplay between the agendas of these women, who were striving to establish their own political power within a misogynist culture that sought to deny them this capacity, and those of Eiximenis and his emulators, who were aiming to entrench their own personal positions, and to promote the style of devotion championed by the Observant Franciscans, is what drove the creation and dissemination of this literature.

The present book consists of two parts: “Genesis” and “Afterlife.” Part 1 examines the context of Eiximenis’s works at the time and in the environment in which he was crafting them: the aristocratic society of the late-fourteenth-century Catalan regions of the Crown of Aragon. Part 2 analyzes his work’s reception, adaptation, and translation in the Castilian and Portuguese royal courts of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. In general, the content and the exemplary models put forward by Eiximenis and similar authors are contrasted with the actual experiences of the noblewomen and queens who were behind the dedications, who owned and most likely read those works, and who were contemporaries of the authors and adaptors. Chapter 1, “A Return to Piety: Eiximenis and the Culture of the Late Medieval Catalan Court,” examines the author himself, his circle, and the cultural, literary, and social contexts in which his particular type of didactic literature emerged. In chapter 2, “Noble Inspiration: Sanxa Ximenis d’Arenós and the *Book of Women*,” I historicize the *Llibre de les dones*—a work that is read in a very particular light when the lady to whom Eiximenis dedicated the book, Sanxa

Ximenis d'Arenós, Countess of Prades, and the complicated circumstances of her life are considered. Chapter 3, "Fit for a Queen: The *Scala Dei*, Franciscan Queenship, and Maria de Luna," follows the same line, but in regard to a new patroness in whom Eiximenis wanted to inculcate a model of "holy Franciscan queenship." It was in Maria de Luna's royal court that Eiximenis expressed his ideas in a form that constitutes an enduring model of Christian queenship and devotion.

Part 2 begins with chapter 4, "Found in Translation: Isabel the Catholic Reads Eiximenis." Here I examine those of Eiximenis's texts that were translated from Catalan into Castilian (Spanish), in order to understand why and how certain texts were taken up at the court of the Catholic Kings, and what the impact of Catalano-Aragonese culture in Castile was. On the one hand, Isabel the Catholic ordered a Spanish translation of the *Llibre de les dones*, and on the other, Eiximenis's *Scala Dei* was drawn on by religious reformers from García Jiménez de Cisneros to Ignacio of Loyola. Other texts, like Eiximenis's *Vita Christi* and the *Book of Angels* also became very popular in Castile. It was in the fifteenth century that Eiximenis became more of an Iberian phenomenon. The fifth and final chapter, "Eiximenis on the Atlantic: The *Chariot of Ladies* and Catalina of Habsburg," analyzes a new appropriation and translation of the text, one that combined the *Llibre de les dones* with new material developed by the new translator, taken in part from Joan Lluís Vives's *De institutione feminae christianae* (*On the Education of a Christian Woman*) and other sources, so as to serve both a queen of Portugal, Catalina of Habsburg, and her daughter, Maria Manuela of Portugal (the first wife of Prince Felipe of Asturias, later Philip II of Spain), as well as other Habsburg women, and the broader female audience in the mid-sixteenth century. Analyzing these additions in the light of the advantages and difficulties that royal women faced in this new era can help us appreciate the changes in gender discourse that took place in the transition from the Middle Ages to the early modern period, and reconsider questions such as that proposed in 1977 by Joan Kelly: "Did women have a Renaissance?"<sup>44</sup>

This book will help us understand how these women, from Sanxa Ximenis to Princess Maria Manuela, negotiated social norms and exercised agency, and the role that they played in shaping contemporary notions of gender and power, and how male writers, advantaged in gender but lower in status, tried to further their personal and institutional agendas by insinuating themselves into the good graces of these women. In conclusion, together the five chapters of this book trace not only the transformation of specific works of

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44. See the conclusion, note 64.



literature, but the evolution of gender discourse and notions of virtue and propriety from the 1390s to the 1550s, throwing light on women's concept of virtue, models of queenship, and men's view of women at the dawn of the modern era. In the process, this book illuminates the work of a medieval Catalan writer who was well known and influential in his time, but whose importance has been obscured by the modern construction of canon, while addressing issues at the heart of literary creation and dissemination—the tension between the various agendas, explicit and obscure, of both authors and their patronesses—showing how the idealization of female conduct changed over time and how it related to those same historical women who were supposed to read those texts.