

TOWARDS AN ENGLISH BIBLIOGRAPHICAL LIST ON THE CANARY ISLANDS

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An examination of the main bibliographies compiled by several specialists on topics such as Travels in Spain or English-Spanish contact throughout history reveals that most of the publications in English concerning the Canary Islands seem to have been ignored. It appears that there is quite a copious amount of literature on various subjects that remains unknown not only to the general public but also to many scholars. It is our aim to provide a preliminary bibliographical list that may help solve this problem and serve the purpose of making at least some of these works accessible to those interested in the subject.

INTRODUCTION

The Canary Islands have long been the source of an inestimable number of publications which range over a whole variety of subjects. Among these we might include a great deal of travel books, tourist guides, as well as other works with a historical, socio-cultural or even literary and linguistic orientation. We should also mention all sorts of scientific studies, covering various disciplines such as anthropology, astronomy, biology, botany, entomology, geology, ornithology and other fields within zoology, together with numerous researches related to climatic and health issues.

Not surprisingly, many of the titles of these works are in English. The close contact that Canarians have maintained throughout history with a great deal of British traders, seamen, scientists, and with many other travellers who either visited or became permanent or temporary residents might explain the expanding interest arisen in the English-speaking world for this Spanish archipelago, particularly over the last two centuries (cf. Bethencourt Massieu 1956; Castillo 1992-93, 1998; Fajardo Spínola 1977; Fernández-Armesto et al. 1995; García Pérez 1988; González Cruz 1995; Herrera Piqué 1987; Martín Hernández 1990; Quintana Navarro 1992a, 1992b).

So far, we have collected a total number of 204 items, which certainly results in a long (though probably incomplete) bibliographical list. However, most of this

literature remains unknown not only to the general public but, inconceivably enough, to many scholars whose specialities are either Travels in Spain or English-Spanish contact throughout history. In this paper we examine the main bibliographies compiled by several specialists in these fields, and we find that most English works on the Canary Islands are conspicuous by their absence from these catalogues. As a first step to solve this problem, it is our aim here to provide a preliminary bibliographical list that may serve the purpose of helping to make at least some of all those works accessible.

1. REASONS FOR AN OUTSTANDING ABSENCE

As García Pérez (1988: 17) explained, when searching for references to these islands in the many books about English travellers in Spain one is immediately struck by the fact that the Canaries have largely been ignored. Apparently, the islands do not count in this literature, despite the existence of numerous travel accounts published by all kinds of visitors, including members of scientific expeditions. In our opinion, two main reasons might be given as explanations for this strange case of omission. Firstly, some of the publications only deal indirectly with the issues for which the Canaries are widely known, and therefore the names of these islands do not appear in their titles. This is precisely one of the factors that somehow has hampered our task of finding and adding them to a list that we believe can certainly be increased.

Secondly, in many bibliographical compilations, the Canary Islands have not been considered as a part of Spain, let alone Europe. Conversely, many authors have tended to include most of these works in the same section as other studies related to the African continent, including journeys to the West Coast. In fact, after studying the references compiled in classic works like those by Raymond Foulché-Delbosc (1986), Arturo Farinelli (1942, 1944, 1959) or José Alberich (1978), we found that they hardly mention any of the bibliographical items that we have included in our list.

It might equally be argued that there is a tendency to identify Spain with the continental peninsula, and that both foreign and national authors seem to follow this line of thought whenever they differentiate Spain from the Islands. In their doing so, it turns out that the political reality is somehow overshadowed by the geographical one. This seems to be the case when Elizabeth Murray (1859) writes her *Sixteen Years of An Artist's Life in Morocco, Spain and the Canary Islands*, or when Thomas Debary (1851) titles his book *Notes of a Residence in the Canary Islands, the South of Spain and Algiers*. Likewise, a distinction is made between Spain and other Spanish non-continental regions, as illustrated in the title of Sir John Carr's book *Descriptive Travels in the Southern and Eastern Parts of Spain and the Balearic Isles in the Year 1809*, published in London in 1811.

Whatever the reason, the point we really want to make here is that there is quite a copious amount of literature in English on the Canary Islands, which is not listed in any of those classic, and apparently exhaustive, bibliographies we revise in

the next section. As we shall see, the works they *do* include are scant and scarcely illustrative of the impact the Canaries have had on many English-writing authors.

2. A REVIEW OF THE RECORDS

A chronological review of the significant bibliographical works on the topic we are engaged in should start with Foulché-Delbosc (1896). This early study only mentions Elizabeth Murray's work, among a total of 858 items compiled. Likewise, in Farinelli's classic bibliography —partially based on Foulché-Delbosc's— the references to works on the Canary Islands are also missing, except for Murray's book. Nevertheless, Farinelli did include the works by Richard Hakluyt (1599), Pinkerton (1808-14), Samuel Purchas (1626), and Alexander von Humboldt (1852), all of which contain excerpts devoted to the Canaries. These might count as indirect references that at least lead the readers to a few valuable texts dealing with the Islands. But on the whole, they go very little way towards the exposition of the fascinating area of English-Canarian lore, a very fruitful research subject whose sources will remain beyond the reach of scholars unless they stop being so sadly absent from the main bibliographical works.

In this respect, another case in point that we should note here is that of Alberich's *Bibliografía anglo-hispánica* (1978), where only two titles related to the Canaries can be found: one is the *Journal of an African Cruiser, Comprising Sketches of the Canaries, the Cape de Verds, Liberia, Madeira, Sierra Leone and Other Places of Interest of the West Coast of Africa*, written by Horatio Bridge though published in an edition by Nathaniel Hawthorne, in 1845. The other item in Alberich's bibliography is Sir William Robert Wilde's book, titled *Narrative of a Voyage to Madeira, Teneriffe, and along the Shores of the Mediterranean* (1840, 1844).

Similarly, in his well-known account of the journeys made by a number of *inquisitive* and rather *impertinent* British travellers throughout Spain during the 18th and 19th centuries, Ian Robertson (1988) records the works of about 80 authors. None of them were related to the archipelago, and none of the items compiled in Robertson's bibliography of travels in Spain refers to the Canaries.

With regard to other more recent works on the subject, the situation seems to be remarkably alike: no references to European travellers in the Canaries can be found. Thus, in *Los ingleses y el arte de viajar. Una visión de las ciudades españolas en el siglo XVIII* (1993) Consol Freixa focuses her attention mostly on continental Spain, devoting just a few paragraphs to the Balearic island of Minorca, within a small section titled "The rest of the country".

The same happens with María del Mar Serrano's engaging book on *Las guías urbanas y los libros de viaje en la España del siglo XIX* (1993). For this innovative research, she compiled more than two thousand works out of all the travel literature on Spain published anywhere in any language, between the years 1800 and 1902. Working from a variety of perspectives, Serrano carried out a quantitative study of this literary production, which included all kinds of guides and travel accounts. She

came to several conclusions, notably that during the Romantic period it was the south of Spain (i.e. Andalusia) that attracted the attention of most English travellers, rather than other areas of the country, with the exception of Madrid and the Eastern coast of Levante. In addition, Serrano (1993: 56-57) asserts that a majority of the publications in her corpus (namely, 1076 works) were written in Spanish; followed by those written in French (441), English (326) and German (129). Obvious and precise though these data may seem, we cannot accept the statements and the figures offered by this author as long as she has ignored – not deliberately, we assume – all the writings on the Canary Islands that we have collected, listed and classified below.

3. A CLASSIFIED PRELIMINARY BIBLIOGRAPHICAL LIST

The kind of task we are trying to carry out calls for some flexibility of approach and, in many ways, can be said to involve an almost never-ending survey. Though our research is still in progress, we have already obtained some preliminary results. After a long and painstaking period of searching for, collecting and studying all kinds of available works published in English about the Canary Islands at any time, anywhere, and by any author, we decided to organise our bibliographical material into seven areas, using six main entries and an additional one. The six main entries, which refer to very different subjects and types of writing, contain all those works whose titles explicitly or implicitly (as when we read about *West African islands*) mention the name of (any of) the islands. The additional seventh entry (which we have termed 'general/miscellanea') is the one devoted to those works whose titles do not explicitly mention the name of the islands but do include sections and excerpts related to them. As already stated, this is certainly the most difficult part of our search as it constitutes such a lengthy, and sometimes laborious, task. There are bound to be thousands of works where for whatever reasons the Canaries may simply be mentioned. We assume there are no limits for any of the sections, but this is particularly so for this last one. In all cases, we have listed only those works that so far have been accessible to us.

Below we list the seven entries used, giving also, in brackets, the corresponding number of items found in each. They are as follows:

- I. Tourist Guides (26)
- II. Climatic and health studies (10)
- III. Travel accounts and journals (26)
- IV. Fiction (3)
- V. Historical and sociocultural studies (48)
- VI. Scientific studies (75)
- VII. General / miscellanea (16)

5. CONCLUSION

The ultimate aim of this paper has been to draw attention to two main facts: firstly, that in the last five centuries an inestimable number of English-writing

authors have published all kinds of works on a wide variety of topics related to the Canary Islands; and secondly, that for several reasons this large amount of literature has been ignored and, therefore, not included in any of the most significant bibliographical compilations on the British in Spain.

Finally, in the Appendix below we provide a sample list of the classified items that compose our preliminary catalogue of publications in English about the Canaries. This should be taken merely as a first step in the compilation of a much larger bibliography on the issue. As already stated above, this preliminary list now comprises 204 works; however, it is our belief that these bibliographical annotations might be increased in the near future thanks not only to many other possible findings but, surely, to new writing that is bound to appear soon on any of the seven areas outlined earlier.

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APPENDIX:**A PRELIMINARY LIST FOR AN ENGLISH BIBLIOGRAPHY ON THE CANARY ISLANDS¹****I. TOURIST GUIDES**

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¹ An Annotated Bibliography is now being prepared by the author to complete the present catalogue. The volume will contain critical reviews of the content as well as analyses of the structure of most of the works listed here and of any other publications which will, presumably, be collected in the meanwhile.

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