

DISCURSOS E IDENTIDADES EN LA FICCIÓN ROMÁNTICA

VISIONES ANGLÓFONAS
DE MADEIRA Y CANARIAS

DISCOURSES AND IDENTITIES IN ROMANCE FICTION

ANGLOPHONE VISIONS FROM
MADEIRA AND THE CANARIES

Coordinado por / Edited by

María Isabel González-Cruz

Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria



Bridging Languages and Scholarship

Series in Literary Studies



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Para Nina Vivanco,
gran persona y amiga entrañable
(IN MEMORIAM)

In loving memory of Nina Vivanco,
a great person and a very dear friend
(IN MEMORIAM)

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DE MADEIRA Y CANARIAS

Introducción

María Isabel González-Cruz

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Este libro, editado en formato bilingüe,¹ es uno de los frutos del proyecto de investigación FFI2014-53962-P, titulado *Discursos, género e identidad en un corpus de novela rosa inglesa ambientada en Canarias y otras islas atlánticas*.² El interés, tanto del proyecto como del volumen que aquí presentamos, radica en que ambos han estudiado y dado a conocer un corpus³ de textos de ficción romántica, ambientados total o parcialmente en las islas de Madeira⁴ y/o Canarias. Uno de los aspectos que otorga un gran valor a estas novelas es el hecho de que pertenecen al patrimonio bibliográfico anglo-español y anglo-portugués, por lo que su estudio se enmarca en el área de las relaciones socioculturales entre España, Portugal y el mundo anglosajón, y su consiguiente reflejo bibliográfico.

¹ Salvo que se indique lo contrario, todas las traducciones de citas que aparecen en los distintos capítulos del volumen han sido realizadas por las autoras de cada capítulo.

² Este proyecto fue financiado por el Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad (MINECO) del Gobierno de España durante el periodo 2015-2018. Agradecemos aquí la financiación recibida. Además del equipo investigador, formado por cuatro profesoras de la Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, el proyecto ha contado con la colaboración de otras cuatro investigadoras externas que son, respectivamente, miembros de las siguientes universidades: South Dakota State University, University of Rhode Island, Universidade da Madeira y Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata. En el trabajo que aquí presentamos colaboran todos los miembros del proyecto, con la única excepción de la profesora de la universidad argentina quien, por motivos ajenos a su voluntad, no ha podido participar. Su lugar ha sido ocupado amablemente por la Dra. Inmaculada Pérez-Casal, especialista en el campo de la novela rosa, a quien agradecemos enormemente su colaboración.

³ Utilizamos aquí el término *corpus* en su acepción general de “conjunto lo más extenso y ordenado posible de datos o textos científicos, literarios, etc. que pueden servir de base a una investigación” (Diccionario de la Lengua Española, en adelante DLE).

⁴ La referencia a “otras islas atlánticas” en el título del proyecto se debe a que teníamos contacto con otras universidades de la Macaronesia, por lo que esperábamos poder localizar novelas ambientadas en las islas de Azores y Cabo Verde, además de en Madeira y Canarias. Finalmente, ello no fue posible, por lo que el corpus compilado se limita a novelas ambientadas en estos dos archipiélagos.

Al igual que el proyecto del que surge, el volumen *Discursos e identidades en la ficción romántica. Visiones anglófonas de Madeira y Canarias* se concibe desde una perspectiva interdisciplinar e integradora. Se trata de un trabajo que continúa con mi línea de estudio de la extensa bibliografía en lengua inglesa sobre Canarias, ampliando sus horizontes, tanto al incluir otras islas atlánticas como al analizar un nuevo tipo de publicaciones que hasta entonces no había tenido en consideración por desconocerlas.⁵ Nos referimos a lo que en inglés se denomina *Popular Romance Fiction*, equivalente a la novela romántica – también conocida como novela rosa en español. Este subgénero literario sufre una extraña contradicción: es el género literario más popular pero también el menos respetado, pues, aunque domina las listas de los libros más vendidos, es totalmente rechazado por la crítica, y ha venido sufriendo esta actitud despreciativa durante la mayor parte de sus dos siglos de popularidad (Regis, 2003: 7).⁶ Y es que, como ya señaló Sánchez-Palencia (1997: 10), la novela rosa siempre ha estado doblemente estigmatizada por su condición de literatura popular y femenina. El desprecio que recibe históricamente se explica, según Alonso-Valero (2012: 37), porque este tipo de ficción implica

un proceso de descentramientos, por así decirlo: en primer lugar, se trata de literatura popular vendida en quioscos a un precio asequible [...] sin grandes pretensiones literarias y destinada a un público sencillo, frente a la 'gran' literatura o literatura legítima; además es una novela pensada fundamentalmente para mujeres, frente al centro, lo masculino. También exaltaba la búsqueda de la felicidad y fomentaba una cierta imaginación apasionada, cuyo uso se consideraba de por sí subversivo.

A pesar de su aparente frivolidad, las peculiaridades de los textos que hemos localizado⁷ nos permitieron entender que estos podían ser abordados desde

⁵ Estaré siempre en deuda con la Dra. Laura Vivanco, especialista internacionalmente reconocida en el género de la novela romántica, quien, al saber de mi interés por la bibliografía inglesa sobre Canarias, me indicó la existencia de estas obras, facilitándome un primer listado de novelas. Como siempre, vaya por delante mi agradecimiento para ella.

⁶ Según Regis (2003: 6-7) los críticos desconocen realmente lo que es una novela romántica e identifican todo el género con una única fórmula, que es solo una parte del género. Por este desconocimiento, malinterpretan su relevancia y alcance, apresurándose a hacer generalizaciones acerca de todo el género a partir de un pequeño grupo de textos.

⁷ Nuestras labores de investigación durante estos años nos han permitido ampliar el corpus de novelas, pasando de los 22 textos con que iniciamos nuestra andadura a los 45 que han sido estudiados en este y otros trabajos. A ellos se suman otros 17 títulos de obras de ficción que tan solo hemos localizado, pero no estudiado, y que tampoco hemos

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ANGLOPHONE VISIONS FROM
MADEIRA AND THE CANARIES

Introduction

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This book is one of the outcomes of the *Discourses, gender and identity in a corpus of romance fiction novels set in the Canaries and other Atlantic islands* research project,¹ which was funded by the Spanish government. Both the project and the book are of interest as they have studied and released a corpus of romance novels set completely or partially in one or both of the aforementioned archipelagos. These texts are associated with the Anglo-Spanish and Anglo-Portuguese bibliographic heritage. For this reason, the book, as well as the project, are relevant not only for the Canary Islands and the Portuguese region of Madeira, but also internationally, as they are framed within the field of study concerning the relationships between Spain, Portugal and the English-speaking world.

Following the same lines developed in the project, the volume *Discourses and Identities in Romance Fiction. Anglophone visions from Madeira and the Canaries* has been conceived from an interdisciplinary and integrative perspective. It continues with the main line of research I have conducted in the last decades: the study of the extensive bibliography in English focusing on the Canary Islands. In fact, both the project and the book have expanded the boundaries of this area of research by including other Atlantic islands and by analyzing popular romance fiction, a new type of publications which until then I had not taken into consideration because I was previously unaware of it. This is a literary subgenre that, as Sánchez-Palencia (1997: 10) pointed out, has always been doubly stigmatized for being both popular and feminine literature.

¹ The project was carried out between September 2015 and July 2018, through grant FFI2014-53962-P. In addition to the Spanish research team, comprised of four scholars based at the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, four external researchers also contributed to the project. They are staff members of the following universities: South Dakota State University, University of Rhode Island, Universidade da Madeira (Portugal) and Universidad Nacional de Mar del Plata (Argentina). All these specialists, who have been members of the project, have also contributed to this volume, with the sole exception of the Argentinian colleague who, for reasons beyond her control, has not been able to participate. Her place has been kindly taken by Dr. Inmaculada Pérez-Casal, a specialist in the field of romance novels, whom we thank greatly for her collaboration.

Despite their apparent frivolity, the peculiarities identified in the novels at first helped to demonstrate that these texts would allow for a variety of approaches. Although the vast majority are fully representative of the marginalized romance novel, the corpus compiled also includes some works, which cannot be classified as such. It can be said that the novels studied constitute a particular corpus because they are works written by English-language authors and are mainly set in the Canary Islands and in Madeira to a lesser extent. In many romances, the protagonists form a mixed couple. Therefore, the hero is usually a native islander, or an Englishman with family ties to the islands, while the heroine is always a British subject who, for various reasons, visits or moves to live in these paradisiacal islands, yet also distant having very different cultural traditions and speaking different languages. Both the narrator and the characters are aware of this, so much so that they often comment on their being immersed in a sociocultural and linguistic contact situation. All these elements favor the analysis of a variety of topics such as identity and otherness, intercultural interaction, paradise discourse, etc.

In sum, the volume *Discourses and Identities in Romance Fiction. Anglophone visions from Madeira and the Canaries* offers a representative sample of the type of studies that we have been able to carry out.² These romances were written mainly for a British public, although they enjoy a wide readership all over the world.

Before dealing with the content and structure of this volume, it is important to answer two questions the readers may have already posed themselves:

- Firstly, what type of discourses and identities tends to be developed in romance fiction?
- And secondly, how and why did the islands of Madeira and the Canaries become the focus of attention of a large group of authors working mostly for Mills & Boon and Harlequin?

In the following sections, I will try to provide some answers to these questions.

1. Discourses and identities

The term *discourse* refers to any piece (oral or written) of language in use, that is, it is “a communicative unit that is embedded in social and cultural practices”

² As expected, research over the years has allowed the number of novels in the corpus to increase from the initial 22 texts to the 45 that have been compiled and studied in this book and in other publications (see the second section of the references below). In addition, we have been able to locate a further 17 works of fiction which are set mainly in the Canaries with a few set in Madeira. They belong to various genres, including romance, as well as mystery, science fiction and even comedy. We expect to be able to study them in the future.

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