

ON 20TH CENTURY BRITISH TRAVEL LITERATURE.
AN APPROACH TO FLORENCE DU CANE

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0. - Abstract

The Canary Islands is a travel book written by Florence Du Cane and published in London in 1911, with the particularity that it is illustrated with watercolours by the author's sister, Ella Du Cane. This is an important contribution for the Canaries because it was one of the very first British travel books entirely dedicated to the Isles. In it, we can see how the Canary Islands have been part of the British travel literature thanks to the work of writers like Florence Du Cane.

The aim of this work is to show the importance of British travel literature and the impact for the Canary Islands and to demonstrate the great contribution that the Du Cane sisters made to the Canaries. All these aspects contributed to make them known around the world, which helped to promote the arrival of tourism to the Isles. Besides, we have confirmed that the relationship with England started years before with the trading of wine, cochineal, banana, tomatoes and potatoes.

In order to analyze the diverse aspects that the author describes, I have made a British travel literature background of the 19th century as an opening, highlighting the historic importance of travel literature, to study the way life has developed into the society of nowadays. Then, I did a preamble about the author's interests and the book contents and to conclude, I have pointed out the importance and impact of the British tourism in the Islands. I have specially focused on the issues that attracted the attention of the writer, like the natural richness of the Islands and the unique landscapes, as well as the rural way of living and cultural aspects of the Canary inhabitants of the time. As a consequence, there are reminiscences of the British visitors that have remained along the time and can be seen still now in perfect conditions, as the Cologan House in La Paz or the Sitio Litre.

Key words: British travel books, Cultural Studies, Florence Du Cane, The Canary Islands, Travel literature.

1. - Introduction

This is an approach to British travel literature of the beginning of the 20th century through Florence Du Cane's *The Canary Islands*. This book is a unique contribution because of the combination of travel literature and paintings made by both Florence and Ella Du Cane. This was the only one case of two British sisters doing this kind of work in the Canaries at that time, so it is a quite singular fact.

The aim of this work is to show the contribution that the Du Cane sisters made to the Canaries, with literature as much as with painting and also, to show the importance of British travellers in the Islands. I am going to analyse the different aspects of the Isles that Du Cane describes in her writings, in which she appreciates the natural richness of the Islands with its unique landscapes and vegetation, without forgetting social and cultural aspects which are part for Canary lifestyle.

My interest for this topic started since the third year of my degree, when I studied the subject *Canarias y los Estudios Atlánticos Ingleses: África-Europa-América*. In this course, I learnt not only about literature, but also about art, architecture and economy. Furthermore, I made a presentation about traditional costumes, which awoke in me my preference to work in the field of the Canary cultural studies, guided by my tutor Francisco Javier Castillo, who has shown me the importance of the relationships between British and Canary people.

Another feature that inclined me towards Florence Du Cane was the fact that she was a woman, as I am also interested on feminist topics. It really amazed me that a lady of the beginning of the 20th century felt such freedom to travel around the world with her sister, because as we know, at that time women were much subjected to patriarchal authority.

I really enjoy Canary topics because they are part of my culture and I consider there is a lack of knowledge about them. In general, we are not conscious of our history and even less about the contributions of the foreign writers.

Throughout this work, we are going to see a brief introduction to 19th century English travel literature in the Canaries. Next, we will do a preamble about the author and the book in order to understand the analysis of it in a better way. Finally, we will make a conclusion to show the impact that the British visitors had in our islands since that time.

2. - 19th Century English Travel Literature on the Canaries:

A General View

The Canary Islands have always been a focus of interest for English travellers. There is evidence from the 16th century, with the increasing presence of traders, till nowadays with the huge amount of tourism, the biggest economic support since the 1960s. Throughout the 18th century England growing Empire, partly about exploring and travelling, to the end of the 19th century, English people have been connected to the Canaries.

This interest was originated because of the good weather conditions, the eternal spring and the strategic location in the Atlantic Ocean. These aspects give a natural richness, not only in relation to the vegetation but also to the fauna with their native species. According to this, there were different types of travellers, those who just travel to enjoy and others who want to share their experiences in the places they visited. The later originated the travel literature genre.

There are common things in the travellers' attention like the mount Teide, without any doubt, the most impressive view of the archipelago and it has always been the biggest focus of attention, not only of the travellers, but also of the primitive dwellers, who in ancient times considered it sacred and it was the centre of their cults; the Holy Tree Garoé, that the legend tells that provided water to all *bimbaches*, aborigines that inhabited in the island of El Hierro; or the fleeting island of St. Brendan, which appears and disappears or hides behind the fog. These issues really fascinated travellers because they cannot be seen anywhere else.

British travellers used the Canaries not only for the departure for their expeditions but also for commercial issues and relations, which were established from very early. They were also interested in visiting the Isles for scientific curiosity because of their natural diversity. Many travellers also came for medical issues, due to the beneficial weather for the health, mainly for lung illnesses and lately there were established healthcare stations. The first British doctor in realizing the therapeutic conditions of the Canary weather was William Wills Wilde, Oscar Wilde's father, so he started to bring patients to the Isles for recovering (García Pérez 1988: 551). Wilde describes the life in Tenerife in his *Narrative of a Voyage to Madeira, Teneriffe and along the shores of the Mediterranean*, published in 1840.

One of the first writers that spoke about the Isles was Richard Hakluyt in the 16th century, an English writer with such a huge interest in travel that made a compilation of these English narrations, in *The Principal Navigations, Voyages and Discoveries of the English*

Nation. Nevertheless, these descriptions are short and superficial because the islands were just a stopping point for ships.

Another example of this presence was Thomas Nichols, who came to Tenerife to be a trade agent when he was 24 and he wrote *A Pleasant Description of the Fortunate Ilandes*. It is an important book because, although it is a short text, is “the first monography to be printed on the Canaries” (Castillo 2013-2014: 21). It was edited later as a part of Hakluyt’s compilation.

In the 18th century, J. Edens arrived to Tenerife and wrote *An Account of a Journey from the Port of Orotava in the Island of Tenerife to the top of the Pike in that Island, in August last; with Observations thereon by Mr. J. Edens*. He was a quite unknown person, we even do not know what the J. in his name is for, but it can be deduced that he came to the island for trade issues as the majority of English travellers did. Another visitor who arrived in that time was George Glas, who also gave an account of the Islands’ traditions. This merchant wrote a very important volume about the nature of the Canaries, its history, people, etc.¹.

Nevertheless, the apogee of British travellers happened in the first half of the 19th century, when the Canaries appeared in different travel books. They were described superficially, due to the fact that this kind of books was a compilation of different places and lands, so the Canary Islands were just a part or a chapter in the accounts. Without any doubt, the most important traveller and contributor to travel literature about the Canaries was the geographer and naturalist Alexander Von Humboldt, although he was German. He spent some days at Tenerife in his way to America and, although the ship only stopped for a few days in Tenerife, it was enough to visit the Teide and to write some chapters about it in his book *Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of America*. In this account, he shows his interest on geology, and especially on vulcanology and also collected thousands of plant specimens to study.

However, it was in the second half of the 19th century, when the Canaries started to be the protagonists of a considerable group of books. The Victorian Period was an enriching time for travel books, the British Empire was growing and they were willing to travel and know

¹ The complete title of the book is: *The History of the Discovery and Conquest of the Canary Islands, Translated from a Spanish Manuscript Lately Found in the Island of Palma. With An Enquiry into the Origin of the Ancient Inhabitants. To Which Is Added a Description of the Canary Islands, Including the Modern History of the Inhabitants, and an Account of their Manners, Customs, Trade, &c.*

new places. Therefore, during this time we have the important contributions of Elizabeth Murray, Olivia Stone, Alfred Diston, Charles Edwardes, among many others.

During this time, the Canaries were not only present in literature, but also in art. We cannot forget the importance of painters because there were numerous paintings about the Isles in the 19th century. These works have been quite important, because paintings, together with literature, help us to reconstruct history. Literature gives us the verbal and theoretical part and painting gives us the visual one, being both of them descriptive, and in my opinion, they complement each other very well. Commonly, much of the writers that came were also painters, so they completed their books with these pieces of art. Nevertheless, in the case of Du Cane sisters, both of them share this work, being Florence the one who writes and Ella the one who paints.

Paintings, as a way of expression, are a great contribution to history, because thanks to it, we see the development and evolution of life. Artists are a fundamental part in the reconstruction of events because we can see how things were before. Also, foreign painters show us the vision they had of the Isles by coming from abroad, probably they were attracted by things that the islanders were accustomed to so maybe they could pay less attention.

The Canary Islands are the perfect inspiration for painters because of their beautiful landscapes and the flora and fauna that live in. Nevertheless, it is very interesting how they also felt attracted by the day-to-day life, customs and architecture like the typical Canary houses and churches, influenced by the Spanish conquest. The exotic character of the Isles is something that has always impressed visitors: the natural richness, microclimates, endemisms and the beautiful landscapes make these islands unique in the world.

It should be noted the importance of the watercolour in the 19th century. For British travellers, it was the most used technique to portray their views and they were real promoters of it in the archipelago and it continued along the 20th century, as in the case of the Du Cane sisters. Indeed, British painters had a clear pictorial influence on Canary painters of the end of 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, as Francisco Bonnin (1874–1963) who was an aquarellist influenced by the British painters living in Puerto de la Cruz and who founded the “Asociación de Acuarelistas Canarios” in 1944.

Although oil painting was also used, it was not as common as watercolour because it remains wet more time, which is better to blend colours but it is an inconvenient for travellers because they had a limited time to paint and travel. Nevertheless, Marianne North was one of the travellers who used it to capture the beautiful vegetation of the Isles (North 1892). Her paintings are at Marianne North’s Gallery in the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew in London.

Customs motifs and traditions have also interested these travellers, probably because of the differences between both British and Spanish way of dress. Furthermore, they portrayed typical customs of the time like Alfred Diston did, as we will see forward.

We must take into account the importance of women travellers due to a growing desire of independence (García Pérez 1988: 166). There was a bunch of British women travellers in the Isles during this time and it is quite significant because of the situation of women in the 19th century, not only in Great Britain, but also in the rest of Europe. They were obliged to stay at home and their biggest aspiration in life was just to get married and to take care of their husband and, in the case that they would not marry, they would have to look after another male figure as their father or brother. This was the case of Mary Henrietta Kingsley, a celibate woman who felt forced to travel the world in order to achieve her own freedom, and this led her to the Canaries.

All these women who came to the Isles had a high cultural, social and educational level; some of them even were university graduates. Nevertheless, they received many critics due to the sexist society of the time. However, these ladies supposed a great contribution to travel literature of the 19th century in the Canaries because of the great quality of their writings. They paid attention to many details of the everyday life, mainly about women's issues.

Many women travelled with their husbands and some of them were eclipsed by the works of their wives, as Olivia Stone or Elizabeth Murray. On the contrary, due to the patriarchal society, much of these husbands limited their partners, avoiding them to publish, as it was the case of Richard Francis Burton's wife (García Pérez 1988: 171 – 172).

Olivia Stone wrote one of the best accounts about the islands: *Teneriffe and its Six Satellites* (1887). It was one of the most important contributions to travel literature about the Canaries of the 19th century. She arrived to Tenerife with her husband and spent some days visiting it and, then, they travelled to the rest of the group. Elizabeth Murray was the wife of the consul and spent 10 years in Tenerife but was not very appreciated in the Isles because of her comments about the typical customs in her book *Sixteen Years of an Artist's Life in Morocco, Spain and the Canary Islands*.

Although British loved the Canaries and they made very favourable comments, there was something about the society that they always criticized and it was their poverty. They all agreed that there were too many beggars and their writings about it were an issue that made the natives uncomfortable. Travel literature allows us to know about our past, about the traditions but also about our misfortunes. Nevertheless, it spreads the information about the

Isles beyond our limits. Together with this, British travellers showed their prejudices toward Spaniards and a kind of superiority in their writings, not only in Du Cane's book but also in the rest of writings of the time.

3. - Authors and Book

The Canary Islands is a travel book written by Florence Du Cane and illustrated with watercolours by her sister, Ella Du Cane. It was published in London in 1911 by Adam and Charles Black.

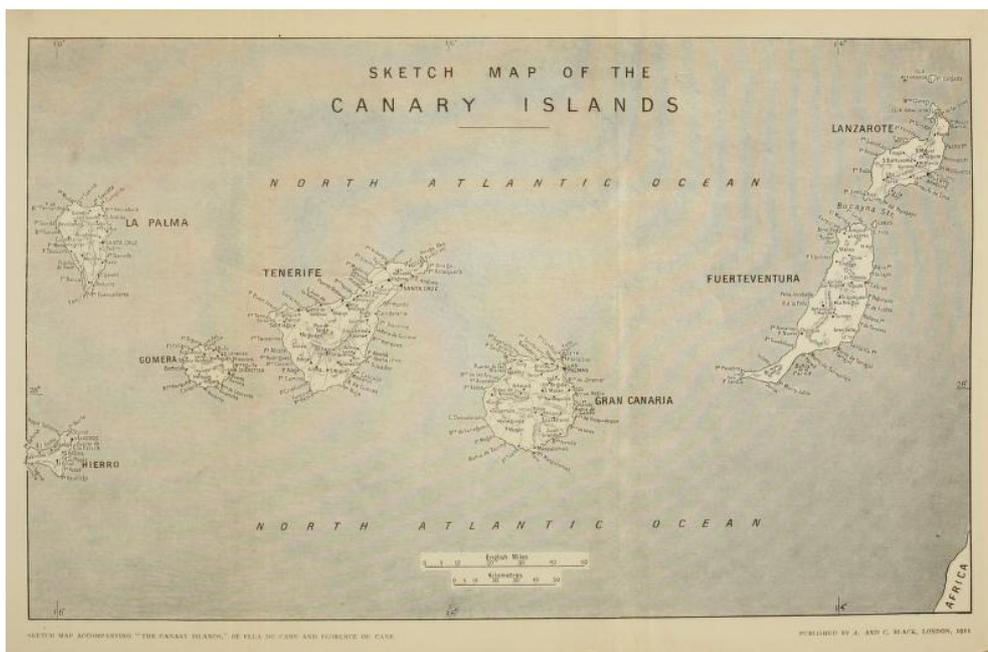
Florence and Ella were two British women who loved to travel and to know new places. These two sisters were the perfect tandem for a travel book: a writer and a painter. Florence wrote her impressions and descriptions about the places they visited, while Ella portrayed them in her watercolours. These British ladies were the only case of two traveller women who shared their vision of the Islands through literature and paintings. Both sisters traversed, not only through the Canaries, but also Japan, Madeira or Italy and they also published some books about these voyages: *The Flowers and Gardens of Japan*, *The Flowers and Gardens of Madeira* and *The Italian Lakes*. In *The Canary Islands*, we can see some references influenced by these travels, for example she mentions Portugal along the book and she compares, in particular, Santa Cruz de Palma with Madeira (p. 137).

The Canary Islands is one of the very first books from the 19th century exclusively about the Canaries and it is structured into fourteen chapters in which Du Cane describes all the islands but, especially, Tenerife, seven chapters are dedicated to it. The rest are about Grand Canary (three chapters: VIII, IX, X), Palma (one chapter: XI), Gomera (one chapter: XII) and finally, chapter XIII is dedicated to the rest: Fuerteventura, Lanzarote and Hierro. The last chapter (XIV) is a very brief “Historical Sketch” of the Canaries in which a slight summary of the Isles’ conquests is made. Du Cane describes in all these chapters everything that attracted her attention, highlighting the most characteristic features of every island, over all the vegetation, but also the cultural customs, architecture, the landscapes and how people dressed. Many of these descriptions were quite similar so, we can find this book somewhat repetitive. Furthermore, she tells popular sayings or legends that Canary people usually say and also she gives advices for future visitors.

She enjoyed all the islands of the archipelago and their particular peculiarities; actually, she highlights specific things of every island. We will see in the analysis how she loved the most the isle of Tenerife, without any doubt the mount Teide was her favourite landscape for the rich vegetation she found at the *Cañadas*. In addition she talks about Grand Canary emphasizing on people’s clothing, or when dealing with Palma, she highlights the

tradition of the *Bajada de las Nieves* (p. 138). Whistling was something that really attracted the attention of the writer when she arrived to Gomera (p. 149), and Fuerteventura reminds her of Africa because of the poor vegetation and its desert-like aspect. Lanzarote was special for its craters and the volcanic aspect and she makes an explanation of Hierro's name and highlights the moisture of the air.

The author placed a watercolour at the beginning or in the middle of every chapter, and related to what is written, although it is not explained in the text. These paintings enrich the book giving the reader an image about what she is writing, and certainly without them the book would lack something more. At the end of it, there is an English sketch map of the seven islands, which curiously is never mentioned throughout the text. In the Spanish translation, there are some differences with the original. The watercolours that appear separately in the original are all together at the end and the sketch map does not even appear and also the titles of the chapters are just numbered while in the original version are numbered but also titled with the name of the island that Du Cane is going to describe.



The Canary Islands is a guide book in which the descriptions are made quite generally, in contrast to more detailed previous works about the Canaries, as George Glas' *Description of the Canary Islands* (1764) or Olivia Stone's *Teneriffe and its Six Satellites* (1887). Du Cane does not make an exhaustive study of all she found in the Isles but a superficial vision of places worth visiting and Canary culture. Furthermore, Du Cane refers to earlier accounts to complete her work, alluding for example to Alexander Von Humboldt's

works in many occasions with long quotations and comments about his stay in Tenerife in 1799, or to Dr. Morris of Kew, who visited the Islands in 1895 and wrote an account about the Botanical Gardens. Also in 1773, Francis Masson, a botanist from Scotland, although in her book appears as Messon, but we do not have evidence if it is really a typographic mistake, and Marianne North who came to Tenerife in 1875. Du Cane also quotes another authors but without mentioning their names, for example, she cites Margaret D'Este but she never specifies her name or her book *In the Canaries with a Camera* (1909) (Jiménez Fuentes 2009: 215).

Du Cane shows us her great admiration for botany, giving us many detailed descriptions of the vegetation she found during her excursions. She makes an especial emphasis on endemic plants, standing out their importance because they cannot be found elsewhere. She was also surprised because of the huge amount of different types of “stranger” plants, as she calls them.

Furthermore, she is especially attracted by flowers that grow in the characteristic ravines of our land and also by the rock gardens that flower in our cliffs. Du Cane names the plants by their scientific terms and then by their common name, and describes the details of the plants: the first thing she describes is the colour, then the form, and also where they grow and where they are found. However, she does not only observe the plants, but she also handles them by experimenting cuts to see what happens. For example, she describes the *cardon* in a special way, giving all the details about it and experimenting that, by making a cut on it, a toxic sage will appear. She especially highlights the *Statice*, an exotic and endemic plant, most commonly known as Sea Lavender, although there are different types of *Statices*, like *Statice macrophylla* or *Statice frutescens*. Moreover, she does not only talks about the *Statices* from Tenerife, but also from Gomera and Lanzarote, where the *Statice brassicifolia* and *Statice puberula*, respectively, are found. She also mentions the *retamas* of mount Teide, which even serves them as shade to rest of the expedition.

Botanical gardens of Puerto de la Cruz are also mentioned in the book. Du Cane wrote part of their history, the fact that they exist thanks to the Marqués de Nava, and she was delighted because of the amazing variety of plants, from different parts of the world. Nevertheless, she pointed out that the soil of the gardens should be renewed because it complicates the growing of flowers.

The Canary landscapes were amazing for Du Cane and she stated it clearly on her work. She always emphasises the most characteristic and typical sceneries that are not seen in her country, and she has never observed something like that. She loved the landscapes of the

ravines, the volcanic landscapes and she was fascinated by the ocean view. Moreover she was enchanted by the views from Puerto de la Cruz and she describes how Palma is seen from there, and, when she is in Grand Canary, she describes how she sees the Peak from there.

But, over all, Du Cane felt a great admiration for Mount Teide, as it is usual among all the travellers visiting Tenerife and the natives. She defined it as “the most beautiful sights in the world” (p. 43). In her expedition to the Cañadas, she describes not only what she saw when they arrived, but also the views while going up from the Realejo Alto to the Cañadas and vice versa, coming back from the Cañadas to Realejo Alto. She was fascinated by the lava landscape of the Cañadas. She was also enchanted by the views from the Peak of the sea, the blue sky and of the other islands, like Palma.

Furthermore, she also talks about the people and their clothing and costumes. She describes their physical appearance, their dark hair and eyes, their tanned skin and she repeatedly defines women as beautiful. Du Cane refers to people as unpunctual and loafers and she states a difference between the higher-class and the middle and lower classes. She also makes distinctions between English people and Spaniards with condescension, as previous British authors also did. When talking about people, she makes references to old costumes, as burials in Grand Canary or the whistling in Gomera.

Another important feature of this book is the description of the traditional architecture of the Isles. She describes the Canary houses, like villas, and buildings as churches or convents. Villas are an important feature of the account, since she stayed in one of them: La Paz. When she deals with villas, she does not only describe the architecture, but she also focus on the *patios* and gardens of the house. She also describes the furniture, like the Chippendale.

In addition, she does not forget to talk about economic issues. The economy was something that really attracted her attention. She talks about agriculture, at this point, it should be remembered that wine and barilla were exported and then, cochineal was a source of richness at the beginning of the 19th century, but later aniline colourants were discovered. At the beginning, they did not affect the trade in the Canaries but, in 1874, an economic crisis started: there was a fall of prices in these new dyes in London. And although it was known that the cochineal is the most resistant red colour, the demand declined, in favour of the artificial ones because the price was cheaper than the cost that cochineal harvest supposed. Cochineal is an insect that lives in the variety of prickly pears called *Opuntia coccinellifera*. In these cacti, the typical *tuna* fruit grows. Initially, the Canary harvesters thought that this

insect was a plague, but then, they realized that it was a great source of wealth and they started to take advantage of it.

After the decline of the cochineal, in Tenerife they traded to England with bananas, potatoes and tomatoes. Du Cane does not make any specific reference to any British trade company, but in the chapter about Grand Canary (p. 109) she mentions that in her expedition to the South of the island she sees the banana fields and carts with the label “Covent Garden”.

She explains how the banana was the main source of wealth in Tenerife, even with the competence of Jamaica, which exported cheaper ones. She was amazed because of the great market Tenerife had in order to export their bananas. Another thing she remarks is the typical banana plantation landscape and that packing-houses are “a blot on the landscape” (p. 59). In these packing-houses, lots of men and women work in order to make bunches of bananas to carry in ships to export. She even declares “the initial outlay of bringing land into cultivation is heavy, but then the reward reaped is almost beyond the dreams of avarice.” (p. 57)

It is curious how, when she is talking about the bananas, the writer does not mention the famous British exporter company of bananas Fyffes Ltd. With this company, the banana exportation started in the Canaries at the end of the 19th century and remained until the 20th century. It was an important part of the society of the time and of the economy. However, maybe she does not mention it just by lack of awareness.

4. - An Analysis of...

4.1. - People



A Street in Puerto Orotava

The way people behave and live is an interesting topic that we found in many kinds of books, because it shows the reality of the times described. Descriptions of people show us how society has evolved throughout the years and it helps us to understand our life today. The analysis of people in travel books is very useful for sociology, because it does not only show how the people described behave, but also the opinions of the visitors and their points of view as foreigners. Probably, if we compare descriptions of Canary people written by a Canary writer would differ with those by British writers.

In the descriptions that Du Cane makes of the people she found, she talks about their physical appearance, behaviour, work, costumes..., practically, she makes comments about

Canary people in almost every chapter, except in the one that is about Fuerteventura, Lanzarote and Hierro, because she focuses on very superficial aspects like the landscapes and vegetation.

We need to take into account that the Du Cane sisters came from London, therefore there was a huge cultural difference between the lifestyle of the big city and the more rural life of the Canaries of that time. So, Du Cane talks from a point of view of a modern woman, travelling to a virginal place. In the Canary Islands, people were mostly dedicated to agriculture, although the contribution of travel books helped to the beginnings of tourism in the Isles. The infrastructures of the islands greatly differ with those of London, so for the writer, people were really backward in their lifestyle. Furthermore, the opinion she had of the Spaniards was not actually very favourable, she qualified them as lazy and also unpunctual, in contrast to the stereotypical British people that were more highly educated, not only in their behaviour but also as working people. She stated it on the book, for example, by repeating along it the sentence “in true Spanish fashion”, as an ironic way of critique.

Along the book, Du Cane highlights the beauty of the Canary women. In the first description of the people of Tenerife, she describes their black eyes and their tanned skin, which actually are typical features of Canary physical appearance. The writer narrates how men and women are lazing around in the pier, talking to each other and wearing white clothes, probably characteristic of fishers. “The crowd of swarthy loafers who lounge about the quay in tight yellow or white garments, are true sons of a southern race, and laugh and chatter gaily with handsome black-eyed girls.” (p. 3)

In the next quotation, we see a description of the labourer women that work in the banana plantations and how they carry piles of bananas to the packinghouses. She describes them as strong and, again, as beautiful. Du Cane’s attention is so attracted to these women that she even notices and describes their deep voices. This interest on them must be due to the contrast that the writer felt, because they are women from a different social class: the Canary ones are agriculture workers, while Du Cane comes from the high society.

Much of the labour on the plantations is done by women, and long processions of them make their way to the packing-houses, bearing the immense bunches of green fruit on their heads. Bare-footed, sturdy, handsome girls many of them, with curiously deep voices in which they chant with a sing-song note as they trip along with a splendid upright carriage (p. 58)

The writer also makes distinctions between the higher and the lower classes of the Canary society at that time, stating her preference for the higher ones, as expected, due to her social status. She found friendliness in the higher-classes of the Islands’ society, who were

more open-minded to foreign visitors, probably because they were more educated and concerned with travellers. On the contrary, we can attach the opposite case to the unawareness of the rural people, who were more interested in their agricultural issues than in being well-disposed towards foreigners. “Though the higher-class Spaniards are a most exclusive race, I met with nothing but civility from their hands when asking to see their *patio* or gardens; as much cannot be said for the middle and lower classes of to-day, who are distinctly anti-foreign” (p. 23)

We can also notice how Du Cane remarks cultural differences between British and Spanish people. For example, she is surprised by the fact that a Canary man did not send his children to school because they did not have shoes and she wondered how this is possible, because he had a salary like an average labourer in England, who probably never let their children to not have shoes or not going to school. This demonstrates that cultural issues lead to different priorities and that in the Isles were more concerned with cropping than with education.

The man was living rent free, earning the same wages as an average English Labourer, and two sons in work contributed to the expenses of the house, besides the money he got for the crop on a small piece of land which the whole family cultivated on Sundays, and still he could not afford to provide shoes in order that his children should learn to read and write (p. 24)

Du Cane not only describes people, but also their employment, which were mostly related to agriculture. She explains some terms in order to understand the concepts they represent that are unknown to British readers. For example, she defines *medianero* as: “A *medianero* is a tenant or bailiff who cultivates the ground and receives a share of the profits.” (p. 61)

The author also describes the people of Grand Canary when she arrives there and notices the peculiar rivalry that characterise Tenerife and Grand Canary, which actually reaches to this day. Du Cane says: “I have noticed that there is always a certain amount of jealousy existing between the inhabitants of a group of islands” (p. 105). This knowledge about each other has been possible due to the modernisation of the new means of transport of the time. The biggest advance was the interinsular steamers, which were known as *correíllos*. Thanks to these steamers, it was easier for the islanders to know the other Isles and to see the differences and similarities among them. These Interinsular steamers were built by British shipyards, and they commenced to operate in 1856 to connect Tenerife and Grand Canary, and later on, the rest of the archipelago, even though with less frequency. These connections started for the commerce of alimentary products as bananas or potatoes and, subsequently, for

passengers. British companies also came to trade in the Canary ports because they were interested in the exportation of bananas, tomatoes and wine. Actually, nowadays in the port of Santa Cruz, there is one of these steamers restored: *Correillo La Palma*.

Du Cane made an expedition to the archaeological site of *Montaña de las Cuatro Puertas*, where she explains that these sites are very common in Grand Canary, to what she adds that there were people in the islands with a quite “troglodytic” lifestyle. Here, we see her opinion about some people of the Isles. Right after this statement, she quotes a part of Webb and Berthelot’s *Histoire Naturelle*, which is part of their description of the city of Las Palmas, and they were impressed by these cave-dwellings in which, as they explain, the lights after the sunset produce a quite curious effect.

The Canarios seem to have been especially fond of cave-dwellings, which are very common in Grand Canary, though they are by no means unknown in the other islands; and it is no unusual thing to find districts where a scanty population is troglodytic in habit, living entirely in cave-dwellings scooped out of the soft sandstone rock (p. 111)

Continuing with the *Montaña de las Cuatro Puertas*, she explains that the place must have been sacred because dead people were mummified there with the greatest care. Du Cane describes how the funeral tradition was, that the priest celebrated the burials and that there were *harimaguadas*, “consecrated virgins” in seclusion, who were dedicated to sew goat-skins to wrap the mummies.

The Canarios appear to have regarded a shelf in the burial cave running north and south as being the most honourable position, and on these they placed the bodies of highest rank, judging from the mummies found on them, as the leather is often richly embroidered, and the greatest care was taken in embalming the bodies (p. 113)

She also adds, as part of her advices, that if anyone wants to see the mummies or needs more information, he can visit a Museum in Las Palmas, the *Museo Canario*, “which is said to be richer in remains of aboriginals than any other museum in the world” (p. 113). Nowadays, this museum has a huge room dedicated to the funerary world, where there are mummies, skulls and skeletons. There, Du Cane also found the typical Canary *pintaderas*, different kinds of aboriginal pottery and also a room dedicated to local fishes where she found the so called “devil-fish”. This fish was a kind of monstrous creature which was said that embraced its victims to drown them and that lived on the Martianez beach. Nevertheless, this is only a legend that was said by the fishermen.

In Palma, Du Cane does not explicitly describe native people, nevertheless she explains the tradition of the *Bajada de la Virgen de las Nieves*, which is every five years and

curiously it coincides this year 2015. This is also an important part of people's customs because it shows us the religious devotion they had at that time and that this devotion has reached our days, which prove that they are quite involved in maintaining their folklore. The author explains how the procession is celebrated from the ravine to the sea and that, when the virgin arrives, not only the natives from Palma, but also religious people from other parts of Spain, celebrate a unique and curious party.

Near Santa Cruz the Barranco de la Madera is the home of the Virgin de las Nieves, a very ancient and much venerated image of the Virgin, to whom the church is dedicated. Every five years this sacred figure is carried down to the sea in solemn procession, and the stone ship at the mouth of the great *barranco*, which is called after Our Lady of the Snows, is rigged and decked in gala fashion with bunting. Not only from all parts of the island, but many devout Spaniards congregate to do honour to her, and a great *fiesta* takes place, which must be a curious and most interesting ceremony (p. 137)

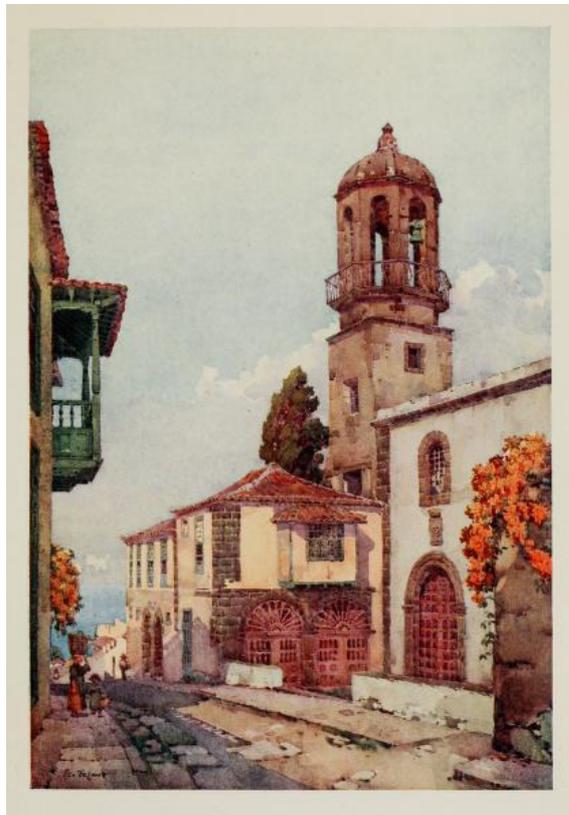
In Gomera, she describes how people communicate to each other by the whistling language, which is unique in the world and that allowed the natives to establish contact despite the physical separations because of the ravines and cliffs. Whistling is the most characteristic thing of Gomera and it is considered *Patrimonio Cultural Inmaterial de la Humanidad* by the UNESCO since 2009. Communication is what differentiates us from animals and what makes us humans, languages are the base of each culture, therefore Du Cane could not avoid paying attention to the whistling language. The author explains how it is used in the village of Chipude while in San Sebastian, the capital, the tradition was almost lost.

A peculiarity of the island is the strange whistling language, which probably in ancient times was in universal practice, but is now more or less confined to one district, the neighbourhood of the Montaña de Chipude, being very rarely used by the natives in San Sebastian, who have most of them lost the art. The best whistlers can make themselves heard for three or four miles, and in the whistling district all messages are sent in this way, which no doubt is of the greatest convenience where telegrams are unknown and deep *barrancos* separate one village from another (p. 149)

4.2. - Dress

Another thing Du Cane describes is the traditional clothing. She explains how women and men are dressed and the peculiarities and characteristics of the Canary fashion of that time. Dressing is an important cultural feature of all kinds of societies, it is adapted to the necessities of each community, for example, in the Canaries, the major way to earn a living was agriculture, so the clothing was the appropriate one for it. Nevertheless, the clothing was classified into *trajes de diario* or *trajes de domingo o fiesta*, but both had common things like the underskirts or the handkerchiefs, for women or the vest, for men.

According to Juan de la Cruz, dresses were mostly of cotton and silk and they were manufactured on looms that were introduced in the 18th century. Dressing is not explicitly represented in the watercolours, there is not one of them dedicated to it, although in some ones like “San Domingo, Villa Orotava” or “A Street in Puerto Orotava” we see people in typical costumes, but just as part of the landscape, in contrast to what happened in the drawings by Alfred Diston in his *Costumes of the Canary Islands*, published in 1829, which are the first references that we have about our costumes.



San Domingo, Villa Orotava

Alfred Diston (1793 – 1861) was an Englishman born in Suffolk and settled in Tenerife. He was living in Puerto de la Cruz and worked as inspector and manager of the *Jardín de Aclimatación de La Orotava*. He travelled to various islands of the archipelago and recorded in his diaries and albums diverse and extraordinary drawings and documents of the popular reality and landscapes of the islands. He portrays the different traditional Canary clothing in his watercolours, gouaches and charcoal drawings and he reflects the way of life of the people and the clothes they used to go to the church, their daily costumes and clothing from different areas of the Isles. Each of these drawings has a short explicative text about the characteristics of the costumes and people social class, economy, etc. We can find representations of the costumes that Diston drew in *La Casa de Carta*, a museum of history and anthropology located in Valle Guerra.

The Canary clothing can be classified according to different times, although all of the garments were introduced by the colonizers (Cruz 2012: 14). So, in the history of the dressing in the Isles, there are some factors that have been crucial for the evolution of it: the Spanish Conquest in the 15th century; after that, the development of the costumes in the 18th century (which are the ones that have come to the present, although with substantial modifications); and finally, the industrial growth in the 19th century due to the Industrial Revolution. Juan de la Cruz classifies the different garments of the Isles into *prendas de origen más antiguo*, like the *mantos* and the handkerchiefs; *prendas medievales* as the hats and the *sayas*; *prendas de origen renacentista* like the *monteras*; and finally, *prendas del siglo XVIII* as the *capotes* and *enaguas*. There are some common elements in the dressing of all the islands as *capotes*, *corpiños*, *calzoncillos*, *mantillas o polainas*, among others. When referring to the dressing, Du Cane firstly describes the garments of the “sturdy country women”, as she defines them. The author makes reference to the hats that women wore together with the typical handkerchiefs, which were originated in the East and have been used by women in all Spain (Cruz 2012: 25) “Their peculiar head-dress consists of a tiny straw hat, no larger than a saucer, which acts as a pad for the loads they carry on their heads, from which hangs a large black handkerchief either fluttering in the wind, or drawn closely round the shoulders like a shawl” (p.3).

Du Cane talks about the *mantas*, which was the favourite warm clothes for men (Cruz 2012: 66) actually, the writer mentions them in various occasions, which allows us to think that they were very popular in the Isles. *Mantas* were introduced in the island by the British and were quite used by men to protect themselves from the cold. “The mules were late, in true Spanish fashion, and we consulted a few weather-wise looking inhabitants who gathered

round our carriage in the Plaza, shivering in the morning air, with their *mantas* or blanket coats wrapped closely round them” (p.33).

In the next quotation, although she is in the chapter of Grand Canary, she is describing common things of the typical dressing in the islands. She is talking about the *mantilla*, which is one of the most antique origin clothing of the islands. It was introduced even before the arrival of the Muslims to the mainland in the 8th century (Cruz 2012: 15). Women wore the *mantillas* over their heads or their shoulders, so they were used as *prenda de recato* (Cruz 2012: 23) and also to warm themselves. We see how she specifies when women wear these *mantillas*, which leads us to realize that they wear them with their *traje de domingo o fiesta*, so it is not a garment for the everyday life. The writer also mentions again the typical handkerchief and she explains how they wear it, knotted in their necks, and that they were very colourful.

On holidays and Sundays the women, especially those who are on their way to Mass, wore their white cashmere mantillas, and I inquired whether this also had any connection with “Our Lady’s” month of May, but I was told in old days they were the almost universal head-dress, a fashion which unfortunately is fast dying out. This appeared to be the only distinctively local feature of their dress, and the usual head-dress of the women and children, with bright-coloured handkerchiefs folded closely round the forehead and knotted in the nape of the neck, is common to all the islands (p. 123-4)

In relation to men, Du Cane mentions again the *mantas*, but now she describes them and talks about fabrics and colours. “The only peculiarity of the men’s dress is their blanket coats; in some of the islands they are made of *mantas* woven from native wool, but as often as not an imported blanket is used, gathered into a leather or black velvet collar at the neck.” (p.124). In Palma, Du Cane describes two different peculiarities of men’s dress, as the *montera* and, again, the *manta*. The *montera* is a kind of weave headdress that dates from the Late Middle Ages and the Renaissance and it was used firstly for more wealthy people, although later on it was extended to the rest of the people (Cruz 2012: 39). Du Cane describes its fabric and its colours. She compares it with the sou’wester hat, which is, according to the Oxford Dictionary “a waterproof hat with a broad flap covering the neck” and it was used by the seamen.

Peasants are still to be seen wearing the peculiar hood or *montera* made of dark brown woollen cloth lined with red flannel, in shape like a sou’wester, turned up in front fitting closely to the head, the flap hanging behind lined with red, or sometimes if the flap is not required as a protection against the weather the corners are buttoned over the peak in front. The *mantas*, blanket cloaks, are all made of wool woven in the island. These are both articles of men’s dress. The women’s caps have no flaps, and are very ugly, and the picturesque dress which survived for a time in Breña Baja is now extinct altogether, as are also the tiny round hats made from the pith of the palm (p. 145)

4.3. - Houses and architecture

Du Cane was also attracted by the typical houses and the architecture, which is clearly influenced by the Spanish conquest. In her descriptions, we find that she talks about different kinds of buildings like villas, Spanish houses, monasteries or churches. And although the architecture is described and observed along the book, chapter 5 is more specific about it because Du Cane focuses on different villas that she visits in the North of Tenerife. She describes the houses, their façades, their peculiarities and their gardens, because although she is describing the houses, she focuses also in the gardens. We can see much of these villas nowadays. As a matter of fact, architecture is the most portrayed thing in the watercolours, and there are a lot of them dedicated to the houses, convents, streets and churches.

At the very beginning of the book, Du Cane narrates her arrival to the city of Santa Cruz, which is worth mention that it disappointed her in some way, because of its careless, ugly and unfinished appearance “Lying low on the shore the flat yellow-washed houses, with their red roofs, are thickly massed together, the sheer ugliness of the town being redeemed by the spires of a couple of old churches, which look down reprovingly on the modern houses below.” (p. 2) Perhaps for that reason, Du Cane did not stay much time in Santa Cruz and she moved to Orotava, where she found better examples of beautiful architecture. She really enjoyed the village and she describes its houses, which are of a clearly Spanish style. These houses had the typical *patios canarios* that were in a pleasant temperature even in summer. The author describes the balconies and shutters that were carved and also describes materials as iron and stone.

This most picturesque old town is of far more interest than the somewhat squalid port, being the home of many old Spanish families, whose beautiful houses are the best examples of Spanish architecture in the Canaries. Besides their quiet *patios*, which are shady and cool even on the hottest summer days, the exterior of many of the houses is most beautiful. The admirable work of the carved balconies and shutters, the iron-work and carved stone-work cannot fail to make every one admire houses which are rapidly becoming unique (p. 21)

In the next quotation, the writer is describing the church of *La Concepción* in Orotava, with its particular Italian style domes that are seen from the whole village. She narrates that the exterior of the church is more interesting than its interior. This church is also painted in one of the watercolours, in which we also see a woman in traditional clothing wearing a basket on the head and a child who is carrying a little basket on her hands. This painting is a really good representation of the typical streets of Orotava because there is also a Canary

balcony, orange bougainvilleas and the typical cobblestones on the streets. “In the Villa are several fine old churches, whose spires and domes are her fairest adornment. The principal church is the Iglesia de la Concepción, whose domes dominate the whole town. The exterior of the church is very fine, though the interior is not so interesting” (p. 27)

She makes emphasis in Spanish architecture and she even compares the construction along the time: “The fine old doorway and tower of the Convent and Church of Santo Domingo date from a time when the Spaniards had more soul for the beautiful than they have at the present time.” (p. 27). In Puerto de la Cruz, there were Spanish villas used as summer residences because the weather was less hot than in the capital. “To the east of the town lies a district where, in old days, the Spaniards built their villas as summer residences, in which to escape from the heat and dust of the town.” (p. 68)

In chapter V, Du Cane mentions seven different villas: La Paz; San Bartolomeo; El Cypress and El Drago, which are mentioned quite briefly; and a villa which she does not specify its name, but she says that it has a Portuguese gardener; Sant Antonio; and finally, El Sitio del Pardo, that has been changed its name along the time, being known now as the Sitio Litre.

She stayed at one of the most significant and important houses of Puerto de la Cruz: the Cologan House. It is situated in the zone of La Paz, near of the chapel of Saint Amaro and its Anglo-Canary style makes it a fine proof of the influence of British in Tenerife. “One of these old villas became our temporary home, so I am to be forgiven for placing it first on the list. A steep cobbled lane leads up from the Puerto, bordered with plane trees, and here and there great clumps of oleanders, to the plateau some 300 feet above the sea on which stands the house of La Paz.” (p. 68). This house is also famous because Humboldt stayed there in his visit to the island, nevertheless, Du Cane says that it is not absolutely sure his stay because in his words, it is ambiguous if he stayed at La Paz or in other Cologan’s residency. In any case, there are much people that know this house as “Humboldt’s villa”. This house is also near the Botanical gardens, a space full of a great variety of plants that have been brought from different climates and that there is a suitable weather and a special attention for them. However she says that “In this garden are collected treasures from every part of the world; new ground is sadly needed as the immense trees and shrubs have made the cultivation of flowers a great difficulty” (p. 75).



La Paz

This villa is also portrayed in one of the watercolours. It is a beautiful painting of the entrance of the house in which we see the door with the family's coat-of-arms above it and the stairs to the entrance, full of plants and flowers which allow us to think that there must be beautiful gardens in the villa. But, she also says that "The house has no pretensions to any great architectural beauty, but has an air of peace and stateliness which the hand of time gives to many a house of far less imposing dimensions than its modern neighbour" (p. 72). We see how she describes the house in detail, paying attention to the coat-of-arms and the Latin motto which means in Spanish *Aquí está mi reposo*. "Over the door is a weather-stained coat-of-arms, and above, again, on a piece of soft green scroll-work, is the Latin motto "HIC EST

REQUIES MEA”, as here to his house of rest came the original owner, to rest from his work in the town” (p.70).

Another interesting description is that of San Bartolomeo, a typical banana plantation of Tenerife.

Further up the road is the property of San Bartolomeo; the land is now entirely devoted to banana cultivation, the house is handed over to the tender mercies of a *medianero*, and the garden tells a tale of departed glories. In the *patio* of the house a donkey is stalled under a purple bougainvillea, and tall cypresses look down reproachfully at the fallen state of things (p.77)

As we know, she has been to Madeira before coming to the Canaries and she compares and makes references to it.

This garden showed that it had originally been laid out with great care and thought, not in the haphazard way which spoils so many gardens, and afterwards I learnt that it had been planned by a Portuguese gardener, and I recognised the little beds with their neat box hedges, the clumps of rosemaries and heaths which, though they were somewhat unkempt, showed that in former days they had been clipped into shape after the manner of all true Portuguese gardens (p, 78)

The Sitio Litre Orchid Garden is located in the villa of the same name built in 1730 and located in Puerto de la Cruz. “El Sitio is another old villa which was visited by Humboldt, who was present on the eve of St. John’s Day at a pastoral *fête* in the garden of Mr. Little, who appears to have been the original owner of El Sitio” (p. 80). Its name comes from Mr. Archibald Little, a British merchant that bought it in 1774, and the name changed through a phonetic evolution from Little to Litre, as it has happened with many British words. Nevertheless, in the book, the name appears as Sitio del Pardo because it was also known by this name at that time. Afterwards, it was bought by another British man, Mr. Charles Smith, and it was his family property until 1996. This garden has received many visits of distinguish people as Agatha Christie, William W. Wilde or Alexander Von Humboldt and Marianne North, who are cited in the book. Marianne North stayed two months in this house and painted her collections of plants from the Canaries, which are on display in the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, London.

On the other side of the yawning *barranco* lie Sant Antonio and El Sitio del Pardo, both old houses, built long before the town began to develop and new houses cropped up on the western side. Across this *barranco* a new road, which was to lead from the *carretera* to the Puerto, was commenced some years ago, and left unfinished, after even the bridge had been constructed, because the owner of a small piece of land refused to sell or allow the road to pass through his property (p.79)

Talking about the villa of Sant Antonio, she says that the garden is abandoned and she also talks about the house and its furniture, she even mentions the Chippendale style. She says that:

The pattern of the screens, arches, and arbours are distinctly Chippendale in character and design, and are painted a soft dull green. In several other instances I noticed admirable patterns in the wood-work of screens to deep verandahs, and in the upper part of wooden doorways. Chippendale must at one time have been much admired and copied in the Canaries, and to this day, in even the humblest cottage, the chairs are true of Chippendale design, though roughly carved (p. 83)

When arriving to Las Palmas she actually does not mention anything about architecture, nevertheless she talks about Hotel Santa Catalina (p. 105) and Christopher Columbus' house, although not in architectural terms. When referring to Christopher Columbus, she explains his story and the legend that he died in Las Palmas, but she quotes Washington Irving's *Life of Columbus* to explain that this story is not true. "In the town of Las Palmas an old house is pointed out as the house where Christopher Columbus died; but I am afraid, if we are to believe historians, this is merely a flight of the imagination." (p. 108)

In the watercolours, we see one about Las Palmas in which we see the Cathedral of Santa Ana, curiously in the text it is not described, keeping in mind its importance. She also mentions another churches like *Nuestra Señora del Pino* in the last chapter dedicated to Grand Canary, although she does not describe its architecture.

4.4. - Landscape

Du Cane also makes descriptions of the landscape she observed during her journeys. It is important to remark that she mentions the Peak in many occasions, because it is the most impressive scenery of the islands. Actually she talks about it when she is in Tenerife and when she sees it from Grand Canary.

Landscapes in the Isles are characterized by its unique beauty and Florence expresses it on the paper, while Ella captures it on her watercolours. Canary landscapes are distinguished for their clear skies and its orange colour in the nightfall, pine tree woods and banana plantations. She loved the typical villages of Tenerife, like Orotava or Realejo Alto, that is why she makes special emphasis on them and on the views she had from there. We see descriptions of the landscape along the whole book, but particularly in chapter III, in which she narrates her expedition to the Cañadas.

Du Cane is here describing the views she enjoyed on her way to Orotava, going through Tacoronte. She comments that the best way to go is “by the main road or *carretera*”: “Turns in the road reveal unexpected glimpses of the Peak on the long descent to the little village of Tegueste, and below lies the church of Tejina, only a few hundred feet above the sea” (p.12). She also refers to the Teide as “the guardian-angel of the valley” (p.13) and once she arrives to Orotava she says: “The valley is justly famous for its beauty, and in clear winter weather, when the Peak has a complete mantle of snow”. She describes the typical landscape of the North of the island in winter, Mount Teide covered of snow, it is an image of an impressive beauty. One of the watercolours is precisely about this image:



The Peak, from Villa Orotava

She describes not only natural landscapes, but also the view of the villages, categorizing Realejo Alto as the most picturesque one. We see how she compares with Italian locations and this comparison is influenced by her previous travel to Italy, as I mentioned in chapter 3. “The village of Realejo Alto is, without a doubt, the most picturesque village I ever saw in the Canaries. Its situation on a very steep slope with the houses seemingly piled one above the other is very suggestive of an Italian mountain village.” (p. 29).

In the next excerpt, Du Cane is describing the views she had from the valley of Orotava. From this place, it can be seen different villages of the North of the island, as La Perdoma or La Cruz Santa. In this example, we can see how she is describing a landscape of villages again. The North of the island was the favourite location for British travellers because of the beautiful green landscapes and the innate charming of the villages.

Below lay the whole valley of Orotava, and we were leaving the picturesque town of the Villa Orotava far away below us on the left. The little villages of La Perdoma, La Cruz Santa, and the two Realejos, Alto and Bajo, were more immediately below us, and far away in the distance beyond the Puerto were to be seen Santa Ursula, Sauzal and the little scattered town of Tacoronte (p. 35)

As we have already mentioned, she was fascinated by the Teide. She describes the landscape she saw from this altitude, like the island of Palma. When they arrived to the Teide, she writes the words a writer who defined the Peak as “the very abomination of desolation” among other discourtesies, although Du Cane does not name her, she was referring to Margaret D’Este (Jiménez Fuentes 2009: 215). The writer responds to this statement: “it is curious how being over-tired, wet and cold will make one find no beauty in a scene, which others, who like ourselves have seen it in glorious sunshine, will describe as one of the most beautiful sights in the world.” When they are at the Pike she also says amazingly “The island of Palma seemed to be floating in the sky; the line of the horizon dividing sea and sky appeared to be all out of place.” (p. 43)

There are a great variety of descriptions about the Teide and the Cañadas, from the Orotava, from the Corona or even from another islands “From La Corona the view is perhaps at its best. On the left the pine woods above Icod de los Vinos stretch away into the distance to the extreme west of the island, and on the right the valley of Orotava lies spread out like a map.” (p. 48). When she arrived to Grand Canary, she talked about her feelings to the mount:

I own that as I approached to the island there was a curious sense of something lacking, something missing, and then I realised that we were no longer to live under the shadow of the Peak, that an occasional distant glimpse is all we should see of the great mountain which we had grown to look on as a friend (p. 107)

In chapter IV she is talking about the economy which was mainly dedicated to the cultivation of bananas that will be exported to England next. Nevertheless, she refers to the packinghouses as a spot in the landscape. “The packing-houses are also a blot on the landscape, sometimes great unsightly sheds tacked on to what has once been the summer residence of an old Spanish family” (p. 59).

In chapter V, there is also a description of the landscape that it seen from the villa of La Paz in Puerto de la Cruz. She is describing a sunset in which the island of Palma appears in the horizon. This image is beautiful, unique and quite typical of the views from Puerto de la Cruz. “On the left lies the little flat town of the Puerto, over which in clear weather the Island of Palma emerges from its mantle of clouds, and many a gorgeous sunset bathes the whole town in a mist of rosy light” (p. 74).

She describes the view of the island of Gran Canary when travelling from Tenerife. The author narrates the view from the ship mentioning the dunes, the isleta and the Cathedral of Santa Ana.

Many towns look their best from the sea and this is perhaps especially true of Las Palmas. The sun was setting behind the low hills which rise above the long line of sand dune, dotted with tamarisks, running between the port and the isleta, and in the evening light the town itself, some three miles away, looked far from unattractive, its cathedral towers rising above the palm trees on the shore (p. 106)



Las Palmas

In Grand Canary, Du Cane focuses her attention in Telde (p. 110), as a characteristic village of the island and Roque Nublo, as the important pillar of the island which is seen even from Tenerife (p. 128).

In the rest of the islands, she also describes the landscape she saw. For example, in the next quote about Palma, we see how she is describing the views from Cumbre Nueva, where she sees the islands of Tenerife and Gomera. “From the top of the Cumbre Nueva there is a magnificent view over the whole island, Santa Cruz nestling among the hills by the shore and in the far distance lie Teneriffe and Gomera” (p. 141). In Gomera, she talks about her expedition to Valle Hermoso, where she is impressed with the scenery she sees.

On the beautiful expedition from San Sebastian, the port, to Valle Hermoso (the Beautiful Valley), which appears well to deserve its name, the traveller passes through a succession of well-watered and wooded country and lovely forest scenery, said to be unsurpassed in the Canaries. (p. 147)

When she arrives to Fuerteventura and Lanzarote, she realizes of the change of landscapes, from the green ones of the other islands to more desert-like ones. “Both Fuerteventura and the neighbouring island of Lanzarote are given a distinctly African

appearance.” (p. 152) And she repeats the same comparison about Lanzarote: “the island is very African in aspect in places, the camels, the vast stretches of blown sand and the absence of vegetation being suggestive of the Sahara” (p. 153).

4.5. - Vegetation

Du Cane shows a clear weakness for plants and vegetation in general, she is enchanted with the biodiversity of the islands, which natural richness is unique in the world, and she shows it in her writing. She is a botanist and she makes it obvious in her work, due to the detailed descriptions of every plant she saw, no matter how small it was.

The author narrates her impressions and her surprise when discovering that vegetation was even richer than what she expected.

I had always heard that the Canary Islands were rich in native plants, but I hardly realised that almost each separate *barranco* [...] would have its own special treasures, and that the cliffs by the sea are so rich in vegetation that in many places they look like the most perfect examples of rock gardens (p. 50)

She pays attention to plants everywhere, in the *patios* of the villas, in the towns, in the ravines, and certainly in the gardens. She was also fascinated by the plants that grow in the so characteristic ravines of the islands.

Furthermore, it is important to remark that due to the microclimates of the islands, there are many different species depending on the zone they grow. Vegetation in every island is also different, although there are some varieties in common.

Du Cane was also impressed with the typical pine trees she saw. Canary pine trees are quite characteristic of the native vegetation and are part of the Isles natural richness. They are characterized by its important resistance to fire, growing again after burning. She describes the dragon tree, prickly pears, *statices* or *retamas* among other kinds of plants.

At the beginning, the first thing she mentions about vegetation is the cochineal plant. She tells how in the 18th century, in the Isles people thought that this plant was a kind of plague, but then, they realize that it was a “source of wealth [...] in fact, the islanders thought their land was as good as a gold-mine” (p.5).

Du Cane was amazed at the Dragon tree, so characteristic of the island, and she talks about it various times, she mentions the one that was located in the Church of Santo Domingo (p. 8), another one situated in Realejo Bajo (p. 30) and also, the one located in the Villa. “One of the great curiosities of the Villa was the great Dragon Tree, and though it stands no more, visitors are still shown the site where it once stood and are told of its immense age” (p. 25). Finally, the famous millenary Dragon tree of Icod could not be missing. She visited it, which is still today a must-stop for the visitors in Tenerife. “Visitors to Icod are all taken to see their

famous dragon tree, *Dracoena Draco*, of which the inhabitants are justly proud, as it is now the largest and oldest in the island since the destruction of its rival in Villa Orotava.” (p. 89)

Du Cane focuses on vegetation even when she talks about the villages, as in the case of Puerto de la Cruz, about what she says that is a deserted city which seems to be not much cleaned. Nevertheless, she could not avoid talking about the characteristic bougainvillea that grows there. “Gorgeous masses of bougainvillea tumbled over garden walls, and glimpses were to be seen through open doorways of creeper-clad *patios*.” (p. 19).

In the next excerpt, Du Cane is describing the vegetation she was discovering in her expedition to the Cañadas. She explains the typical *retamas*, its colour and its form, and that they flower in May.

The foreground of rocky ground is interspersed with great bushes of *retama* (*Sparto-cytisus nubigena*), a species of broom said to be peculiar to this district. [...] When in flower in May its sweet scent is so powerful that not only does it fill the whole air in this mountain district, but sailors are said to smell it miles out at sea. Our guides told us some bushes had white flowers and others white tinged with rose colour. (p. 42)

As I have previously said, she was amazed for the huge amount of different plants and she realizes that it is almost impossible to give a complete account of all the endemic plants that live in the Isles. Again, she makes references to previous works.

There are so many plants that will be strangers to the newcomer that it is hard to know which to mention and which to leave out, as far be it from me to pretend to give a full list of Canary plants, and the longer I stayed in the islands the less surprised I was to hear that a learned botanist had been four years collecting material for a full and complete account of the flora of the Canaries, and that still his work was not completed (p. 51)

The author finds important to remark the *Euphorbia canariensis* or as it is commonly known: *cardón*. She defines it as “one of the most conspicuous and ornamental of the cliff plants” (p. 51). Furthermore, she does not only found this plant in Tenerife, but also in Grand Canary, and she says: “Here some huge clumps of *Euphorbia canariensis* show that this plant is not peculiar to any one island, but is equally at home on any bed of lava or cliff” (p. 110).

The next excerpt is dedicated to the *plátano canario*. She explains the old thinking about the properties that this fruit has and then the etymology of the name of this fruit, which is curiously derived from an English word.

The botanical name of the Banana, *Musa sapientum*, was given in the old belief that it was the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The variety now under cultivation is *Musa Cavendishii*, the least tropical and most suitable for cool climates. Locally they are called *Plátano*, a corruption of the original name *Plántano*, from plantain in English, under which name they are always known in the East. (p. 60)

Du Cane could not avoid talking about the *Jardín de Aclimatación de la Orotava*, commonly known as the Botanical Gardens. This garden is situated in Puerto de la Cruz, at that time, Port Orotava. The garden has an immense variety of plants taken from around the world “In this garden are collected treasures from every part of the world; new ground is sadly needed as the immense trees and shrubs have made the cultivation of flowers a great difficulty” (p. 75). There is such a quantity of species that “To give a list of all the trees and plants would be an impossibility and any one who is interested in them will find an excellent account of the gardens in a pamphlet written by Dr. Morris of Kew.” (p. 76).

In Las Palmas, the writer makes an expedition to the Barranco del Dragonal where she finds a good variety of plants, also. She meets again with the dragon tree, showing us that it was not only native of Tenerife, but also of the rest of the islands as Grand Canary.

A century ago this district was a mere expanse of cinders interspersed with the usual Canary plants which find a home in the most desolate of lava beds. Clumps of Euphorbias and its two inseparable companions, the miniature dragon tree, Senecio Kleinia, and the graceful Plocama pendula broke the monotony of the grey lava. (p. 116)

Du Cane describes vegetation in Telde, telling us that they cultivate crops, much of them were used for exportation like potatoes and bananas, as we have said before. The writer also mentions the month of May, which is very important in the whole archipelago, not only because the flowers, but also because it is the month of the Virgin and all the typical festivities start.

The volcanic soil appears to suit cultivated garden plants, as well as wines, bananas and potatoes, and the gardens in the neighbourhood of Telde are a blaze of colour and have a wonderful wealth of bloom in May, which is essentially the “flower month” in all the islands (p. 120)

In Palma, the writer makes an expedition from El Paso to Los Llanos and when she arrives to the top of Cumbre Nueva, she describes the views and also, the vegetation she found there. She explains how vegetation grows in the typical Canary lava soil that it needs the soil to be completely cold:

The dense vegetation covering some of the streams of lava speaks for itself of their great age, as it is said that not a particle of vegetation appears on lava until it has had four centuries in which to grow cold, and then the first sign of returning life is a peculiar lichen which appears on the heaps of lava (p. 141 – 142)

In Fuerteventura, she highlights the different kinds of vegetation. In contrast to the green setting of the other islands, she encountered a desert-like landscape, with lack of pine trees and with little vegetation. “The island has no pine forest and trees are scarce: great parts

of it are barren, sandy and rocky plains, and the little vegetation there is, is said to resemble that which is found in certain parts of the northern deserts of Africa” (p. 152).

In Lanzarote, characterized by its volcanic appearance, the vegetation is also quite different than in the rest of the islands. There are herbaceous plants that grow in the volcanic soil after the rains: “In the autumn rains, the sand is covered with herbaceous plants, and in old days the inhabitants of the north of Lanzarote used to transport their cattle to feed there” (p. 156).

Finally, in the last chapter related to the islands, she makes this comment about the island of Hierro, in which she states that the ones who seem to visit the island are just the botanists: “The vegetation is said to be of great interest to botanists, and they appear to be the only travellers who ever visit the island” (p. 159) She makes this statement due to the lack of facilities of the island. Hierro was quite uncomfortable because there was no sea-port and there were no accommodation, so the writer advises the readers to carry a tent if they are planning to visit it.



A Spanish Garden

5. – Conclusion

I have highlighted the historic importance of travel literature, which helps us to reconstruct and to know past times and, to develop to what we are today. In this book, we see the opinion of a foreign writer as Florence Du Cane is, and we can see how the Canary Islands have been part of travel literature. We can also see the importance of the relations of the British travellers with the Canaries, mainly in Tenerife. Thanks to these relationships, we have received contributions of knowledge of botany, medicine together with the enrichment of cultural issues like painting. Economy has been also increased thanks to the British market in the development of the exportation of agriculture, as in bananas and potatoes, which are still traded nowadays. However, it is curious how the writer does not mention British exporters like Fyffes which were the pioneers of the banana exportation in Tenerife or Englishmen like Alfred Diston who painted for the first time the traditional dressing of the time.

Reading this book, we also realize of the huge amount of vegetation that live in the islands and thanks to the botanical studies of many British people, as Marianne North, we can have knowledge of it. I really enjoyed making this work, because while I was working on the topic, I could relate things to my own experience and to the plants, places and buildings I know, I also visited again many of the places that appear in the book to realize the beauty and the condition they have today. The most gratifying thing is that you can still verify these topics at the present time. The buildings the writer describes are still there, the endemic vegetation is amazing still today and the costumes are the ones we use for the traditional celebrations.

It was the vision of the author about the inhabitants of the islands what most attracted my attention. She described the people of the time and their lifestyle, which was very different to what she was accustomed. Workers lived in precarious conditions, many times together with farm animals and with a lack of hygiene, children did not attend to school and they worked in the fields. Nevertheless, she found mutual understanding with the higher classes that were more similar to her education.

To conclude, I have to say that it has been enriching to work in this field, because through the analysis of the text, I approached to many important aspects of my land. I became conscious of the cultural development of the Isles from the 19th century till nowadays.

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