

Literature as Travel Guide: Amenity Writing on Mallorca as a Twenty-First-Century Consumer Product

Patricia Bastida-Rodríguez (pbastida@uib.es)

Gloria Bosch-Roig (gloria.bosch@uib.es)

Universitat de les Illes Balears

Abstract

This article discusses a literary tendency which has emerged in connection with new migratory movements, popular literature and consumer culture in the context of Mallorca. This Mediterranean island receives thousands of tourists every year and currently hosts a significant number of what Laurence A. G. Moss (1994) has called “amenity migrants”, most of them from Germany and English-speaking countries. By focusing on a number of narratives produced by amenity migrants on Mallorca, this paper addresses some of the main features shared by these texts, such as their birth as consumer products for a very specific audience and their idealised view of Mallorcan culture, and contends that a central characteristic of the new trend is its hybrid nature, as it combines fiction – usually crime fiction or romance – with the kind of information expected in a travel guide for tourists.

Keywords: amenity migration, consumerism, crime fiction, romance, travel writing, Mallorca, tourism.

La literatura como guía de viajes: la narrativa de amenidad sobre Mallorca como producto de consumo del siglo XXI

Resumen

Este artículo analiza una tendencia literaria surgida en relación con los nuevos movimientos migratorios, la literatura popular y la cultura de consumo en el contexto de Mallorca. Esta isla mediterránea recibe cada año a miles de turistas y actualmente alberga un número significativo

de lo que Laurence A. G. Moss (1994) ha denominado “migrantes de amenidad”, la mayoría de ellos procedentes de Alemania y de países de habla inglesa. Centrándose en una serie de narrativas producidas por migrantes de amenidad en Mallorca, este artículo aborda algunos de los principales rasgos que comparten estos textos, tales como su origen como producto de consumo para un público muy específico y su visión idealizada de la cultura mallorquina, y sostiene que una característica central de esta nueva tendencia es su marcado carácter híbrido, ya que combina la ficción con el tipo de información que se esperaría encontrar en una guía de viajes para turistas.

Palabras clave: migración de amenidad, cultura de consumo, novela policíaca, novela romántica, literatura de viajes, Mallorca, turismo.

1. Introduction

Amenity migration has been a much discussed social phenomenon since the concept was coined by Laurence A. G. Moss in 1994. For him it stands as a “global condition” (“The Rural Change Agent” 13) specially observed since the late twentieth century, although present long before at a smaller scale, and involving the migration of people to certain rural areas that are “perceive[d] as having greater environmental quality and differentiated culture” (“The Amenity Migrants” 3). Unlike economic migrants, amenity migrants are oriented toward leisure, learning and spirituality, though in varying degrees and patterns according to place (“Beyond Tourism” 124) and it is often the case that they were initially tourists there. Research into amenity migration has mainly focused on its pernicious effects on the environment and culture of the place of destination, with special attention to mountain areas as its more significant manifestation. Scholarship has mainly covered specific locations in North America, Western and Northern Europe, Asia, Australia and New Zealand, though there are other emerging destinations which have not been sufficiently analysed within this paradigm and also deserve attention. One of these is the Spanish island of Mallorca, in the Balearic Islands, a major tourist resort in the

Mediterranean since the early twentieth century – and even before, if we consider its inclusion in the so-called “Grand Tour of Europe” made by young European aristocrats in the nineteenth century (see Fiol-Guiscafré).

Since the second half of the twentieth century, the Balearic Islands have received millions of tourists. According to official records, at the beginning of the new millennium citizens of twenty different nationalities visited the islands and nowadays more than thirty countries send tourists to the archipelago (Govern de les Illes Balears), with the most numerous groups since the 1990s coming from Germany – who were 49.9% of tourists in 2017 – and the United Kingdom – 15.5% in 2017 (Instituto Nacional de Estadística). Apart from these, a significant percentage of incomers from Britain and Germany own property in the islands and live as residents all the year round or most of it. At the beginning of 2019, 17,000 British citizens were registered as residents only in Mallorca and 22,000 in the whole archipelago (Moneo), whereas about 70,000 German nationals have been said to come and go regularly every year from Germany to their property in the Balearics (Fueris). Although these figures cannot be exact – there might be residents who are not recorded as such by the Spanish government or change their status over time – this is indication that amenity migration stands as a growing, outstanding phenomenon in the Balearics today and specifically in Mallorca.

The patterns found among these migrants follow those proposed by Moss: they can be permanent, seasonal or intermittent (“Beyond Tourism,” “The Rural Change Agent”), though they share the fact that “all typically own a residence in the bioregion and perceive themselves as residents” (“Beyond Tourism” 123). Several factors have contributed to the phenomenon, in line with those suggested by Moss (124-25), one of them being the increase in amenity resources over the last decades, noticeably those related to cultural events in Mallorca. Landscape and nature have always been important sources of attraction as well. However, the involvement of amenity migrants in Mallorca goes beyond the attempt to preserve its local environment and amenity culture: among German and English-speaking migrants an interesting trend has been observed which consists of publishing narratives in their own language whose setting and characters are characteristically those of the island.

In the last two decades a significant body of texts have been produced in German and English that share an important number of features, the most prominent being, apart from their Mallorcan setting and the fact that their authors qualify as amenity migrants, their potential use as travel guides to the island, since their pages include valuable information for tourists and ethnographers in combination with topics and clichés typically found in what is known as “genre fiction” or “popular literature.” Indeed, these texts can be interpreted as products for the consumption of tourists and migrants belonging to the authors’ culture, readers who are ready to travel to or already living in the island and seek additional information that will make their experience more enjoyable, while also craving the pleasure and entertainment of reading fiction. The role of literary texts as consumer products has been discussed in the last decades in connection with the emergence of mass culture and the commodification of literature (see Long; Zia), a phenomenon that stands as an important component of present-day literary markets, although its link to contemporary tourism and migration trends has not been sufficiently acknowledged.

In 1994 Moss himself made reference to what he called the “content analysis of novels” as a useful tool to find information about amenity migration (“Beyond Tourism” 122). However, the texts themselves have never been explored as a cultural phenomenon. This article intends to shed light on the trend Gloria Bosch-Roig has called “amenity literature” (“Turistas” and “Mallorca”) by discussing the characteristics shared by a number of texts produced in German and English in the context of recent amenity migration in Mallorca. In order to do this, the article will initially turn to the first travellers who could be considered “proto-amenity migrants”, to use R. S. Glorioso’s terminology (275), as they not only lived on the island for many years, but also wrote about it in various types of texts, placing it on the international literary map. Next, a number of recent German narratives about Mallorca shall be discussed, most of them considered detective fiction or romance. The following section will explore writing in English about the island, which has a more varied nature but shares many features and motifs with that produced in German. Finally, some conclusions will be drawn that support a perception of these narratives as disguised travel guides which contribute to the promotion of international tourism in the Balearics.

2. Proto-Amenity Migrants in Mallorca

Amenity writing in Mallorca cannot be discussed without first considering those who can be perceived as the initiators of the trend. Among the earliest foreign visitors in the Balearics it is perhaps not surprising that some could be considered “proto-amenity migrants,” as they settled in the islands for periods ranging from several months to several years or even for their whole lifetime. This pattern can be observed in several eminent travellers, inheritors of the spirit of the Grand Tour, who came to Mallorca in search of exoticism and vestiges of a medieval past while escaping from nineteenth-century burgeoning industrialization. Some of them even wrote travel books or travelogues which came close to the first travel guides that emerged in the same period, the late nineteenth century. This was the case of German scientist Alexander Pagenstecher (1825-1889) and German zoologist Otto Bürger (1865-1945), who offered in their texts realistic descriptions of life and landscape in the archipelago. Bürger, who spent two months in Mallorca in 1912, even included in his *Spaniens Riviera und die Balearen* [*The Spanish Riviera and the Balearics*] (1913) his own assessment—and not always positive—of the quality of public transport, travellers’ accommodation and food.

But the first proto-amenity migrant in Mallorca can be said to be Archduke Ludwig Salvator of Austria (1847-1915), second cousin of Emperor Franz Joseph I and fourth son of the Grand Duke of Tuscany. He visited the Balearics twice in his twenties and during his second visit he decided to buy property in Mallorca and settle there for the rest of his life. He was so fascinated by the Balearic landscape and lifestyle that he wrote a seven-volume book, *Die Balearen in Wort und Bild geschildert* [*The Balearic Islands, portrayed in words and images*] (1869-1891), which included descriptions of landscape, animals, history, folklore and customs, as well as maps and engravings. In the 1920s a relevant number of German citizens settled in Mallorca and opened their own businesses, parallel to a growing tourism coming from Germany. It is in the last decades of the twentieth century, with the tourist boom in the archipelago and its growing international visibility, that a stable increase can be observed in the number of German tourists and residents in the Balearics, an increase leading to the phenomenon under analysis here.

The first English-speaking travellers in the Balearics arrived during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and wrote mainly travel books based on their experiences, as discussed by Fiol Guiscafré and Moyà. Although most stayed only for a few weeks or months, the most prominent exception was the poet and novelist Robert Graves (1895-1985), who moved to Deià, Mallorca, in 1929 in search of a “paradise” where he could write, following the advice given by American writer Gertrude Stein. He lived there until 1936, when the Spanish Civil War began, though he returned in 1946 and settled again for the rest of his life. As part of his literary production he wrote a significant number of local-colour stories set in Mallorca – published in his *Collected Short Stories* (1964) – which can be read as precursors of the texts under study here, since they offer valuable ethnographic and sometimes geographic information about the island, although they have been barely visible among his large literary output. Due to his lifestyle and mindset, Graves can be considered not only a proto-amenity migrant but also an important agent in the migration of other English and non-English intellectuals into the Balearics. As a consequence, the anglophone community has expanded steadily in the archipelago, the tendency being more visible in the second half of the twentieth century and blooming in the first years of the twenty-first century.

3. Amenity Writing in German

When discussing recent German writing set in Mallorca, two dominant genres can be found: the crime novel and the local-colour romance, the former experiencing a boom from the 2000s onwards (Kreye). These *Mallorca-Romane* are novels to be read easily while sitting on a chaise longue, which recreate holiday landscapes and settings, lived or imagined situations and/or experiences that contribute either to activate readers’ memories of a place or to encourage travelling there. If a travel guide can be defined as “a book, website, etc. that provides travellers or tourists with information about places of interest, accommodation, restaurants, etc” (Oxford Lexico), crime fiction written in German on Mallorca can be said to fall very much under this definition, as these narratives include abundant descriptions of places of interest for tourists as well as explanations of traditional customs and local recipes in ways that turn them into “veiled” travel guides.

Crime fiction on Mallorca can also be included within a wider literary trend called regional crime fiction, a phenomenon that has reached great popularity in Germany in recent years as reflected, for example, in the enormous success of crime novelist Rita Falk, whose bestselling novels are always set in Bavaria. In all these texts a strong emotional attachment can be observed between the authors and the settings chosen for the plot; this is also the case in those set in Mallorca, as very often these narratives use recurrently the topos of the island as a symbol of paradise. Thus, Mallorca is usually portrayed as a romantic tourist destination chosen by some tourists as the place to commit a crime but always worth the journey. In addition, these narratives are products for ready consumption whose commercial success is usually taken for granted. Their main objective is not literary but to entertain, to attract the sensuous attention of readers, to evoke sensations and experiences through what Roland Barthes has called “the pleasure of the text”. But, as suggested above, they can also be read as travel books, travel guides or even cultural guides, since many of them, besides offering useful information for Mallorca travellers, have a pedagogical dimension when they try to explain Mallorcan culture to the German reader.

One of the most prolific German authors to cultivate the crime novel set in Mallorca is Andreas Schnabel, who has published seven books within a series whose titles begin in their majority with the word *Tod* [death]. Schnabel’s link to Mallorca dates back to forty years ago; nowadays he spends long periods in a rented house in the Mallorcan village of Santanyí. Thus, he can be considered a seasonal resident in Mallorca – and therefore, an amenity migrant – a fact somehow reflected in his novels through the protagonist, detective Michael Berger, called “El Residente,” who works side by side with a Mallorcan police inspector. This also reveals the deliberate intercultural nature of his narratives: the Mallorcan and German worlds, far from each other before, come in touch producing spaces of interaction and dialogue. These texts portray closely delineated characters who can communicate in both Mallorcan and Spanish, as well as narrators who become somehow educators and mediators of Mallorcan culture, as observed in Schnabel’s *Tod oder Finca* [*Death or Finca*]:

Wenn Sie hier leben wollen, sollten Sie sich aber auch an die Gepflogenheiten dieser Insel halten, und wenn Dinge

noch nicht reif sind, dann kann man sie nicht erzwingen [...]. Also, meine Dame, wenn Sie eine Mallorquinerin werden wollen, dann benehmen Sie sich nicht wie eine Deutsche. Er grinste Sie an. Du verstehen? (24)

[If you intend to live here, you should stick to the island's customs, and if things are not mature enough yet, you cannot force them [...]. Then, my lady, if you want to be a Mallorcan, don't behave like a German. He smiled at her. You understand?]

Brigitte Lamberts's *El Gustario de Mallorca und das tödliche Elixir* [*Mallorca's Gustario and the Deadly Elixir*] (2017) and *El Gustario de Mallorca und der tödliche Schatten* [*Mallorca's Gustario and the Deadly Shadow*] (2019) recount how, while travelling through Mallorca in order to write a gastronomic guide, the German journalist Sven Ruge gets involved in a crime. An art historian, Lamberts lives in Düsseldorf and has visited Mallorca regularly for thirty years. Her narratives portray numerous restaurants and typical Mallorcan dishes in what can be considered a hybrid *noir*: a gastronomic crime novel. She has also coedited a short fiction collection, *Mallorca mörderisch genießen* [*Enjoying Mallorca in a Deadly Way*] (2016), comprising twenty-two crime stories authored by eighteen German writers, herself included. Each of the stories is set in a different part of the island and concludes with a recipe and a description of the place, as reflected in her story "Ein Geständnis auf Mallorca" ["Confession in Mallorca"], set in Can Picafort: "Can Picafort liegt im Nordosten von Mallorca und gehört zur Gemeinde Santa Margalida. An der Strandpromenade befinden sich viele Bars und Restaurants, es gibt eine Einkaufsstraße für den Tag und eine Fußgängerzone für den Abend" [Can Picafort lies to the north-west of Mallorca and belongs to the municipality of Santa Margalida. At the seafront promenade we can find plenty of bars and restaurants; there are also a commercial street for the day and a pedestrian area for the night] (43).

Lamberts's fiction can be described as a combination of travel book, gastronomic guide and crime narrative, though her two novels also offer interesting reflections on the tourist boom on the island and historical information on the Spanish Civil War as lived in the Balearics (e.g., "Ein Geständnis auf Mallorca" 63). This sort of literary experiment

can be linked to what has been discussed as unlimited intertextuality, a literary hybridisation which pursues an intercultural, multidimensional, sensorial and hedonistic reading experience. Though the sensorial pleasure of reading seems to be the main objective of these texts, an informative aim can also be observed on the part of the author, which likens it to a present-day travel guide.

Amenity novels also offer spaces for the recreation of Mallorcan folklore, although often tainted with stereotypes. In Bea Milana's novel *Komplott im Süden* [*Plot in the South*] (2015) the author, a resident in Mallorca for fifteen years who signs her fiction with a pseudonym, recreates a real event which ended in a long and unpleasant trial. The *rondalla* "El corb de Ses Punes" ["The Raven of Ses Punes"] – a Mallorcan traditional oral story – works in the text as an explicative analogy:

Es war einmal ein Rabe, der pickte mal ein paar Trauben bei s'Illeta, mal ein paar Bohnen und Erbsen bei sa Cortera und Tuent und mal ein paar Feigen in der Calobra. Dabei war er so alt geworden, dass er seine Federn verlor und nichts mehr finden konnte, um sich den Magen zu füllen. Weil aber nichts erfinderischer Macht als ein leerer Magen, sagte er eines Tages zu sich selbst, als ihn der Hunger quälte: Mal sehen, was ich anstellen kann. Es hat mir nie gefallen, anderen Schaden zuzufügen, aber jeder ist sich selbst der Nächste. Meine Haut ist mir mehr Wert als alle anderen zusammen. Auf geht's Futter suchen! (*Komplott im Süden* 172)

[Once upon a time a raven was picking some grapes in s'Illeta, some beans and peas in sa Cortera and Tuent and some figs in sa Calobra. In the process, he had aged so much that he had lost his feathers and could not find anything to fill his stomach any longer. But, as there is nothing more inspiring than an empty stomach, he said to himself one day when he was very hungry: Let's see what I can do. I have never enjoyed hurting others, but I come first. My skin is more important to me than anything else. Let's go for food!]

Milana does not reproduce the complete story, but only the beginning. By doing this, the strong moralising message typical of *rondallas* is hidden from the reader while the violent plot, very frequent in them, is visible. Therefore, we can observe how the biased intertextual reference she chooses reinforces a negative stereotype about Mallorcans as selfish hustlers and swindlers.

In the world of crime fiction set in Mallorca we can also mention the newcomer Lisa Herding, who represents the second generation of German amenity migrants, as she grew up in the town of Sóller, in the north of the island. Herding has recently published her first crime novel, *Comisaria Fiol und der Tod im Tramuntana-Gebirge [Inspector Fiol and Death in the Tramuntana Mountains]* (2020), whose main novelty is that it features two female detectives as protagonists, a Mallorcan police inspector working side by side with a German ex inspector, which implies a female-centred crime novel – in fact, the first German “femicrime” with a Mallorcan setting.

An example of local-colour romance is that by Heinrich Breloer and Frank Schauhoff – both rooted seasonal residents in Mallorca – titled *Mallorca, ein Jahr [Mallorca, One Year]* (1995), whose enormous success is evidenced by its numerous reprints. The novel attempts to show the authentic Mallorca, the one hidden behind the tourist ghettos, by portraying a German journalist as an emotional expatriate who discovers the real life of the island through a local friend and a beautiful and inaccessible Mallorcan upper-class girl. The book describes the characteristics, attitudes and feelings of the Mallorcans, their behavior towards foreign residents and the ways in which they can be accepted and integrated, in such a way that it can be read as a cultural guide. Thus, the narrative offers many brushstrokes of Mallorcan culture, depicting rituals, ancient traditions and even specific idiosyncrasies of the locals which are quite complex and difficult to understand by an outsider. In the following quote, the narrator explains to the reader the dynamics of buying and selling property on the island, thus revealing the author’s deep, almost local knowledge of Mallorcan traditions as well as the text’s indirect goal of fostering communication between the German and Mallorcan cultures by providing an example of a common situation that often leads to misunderstanding:

Man wird einen Mallorquiner, mit dem man nicht bekannt oder befreundet ist, nicht dazu bringen, zuzugeben, dass er irgendein Interesse daran hätte, etwas zu verkaufen oder zu vermitteln. Das führt bei Verkaufsgesprächen oft dazu, dass der ausländische Käufer glaubt, der mallorquinische Verkäufer pokere auf mehr Geld. Eigentlich spekuliert er aber nur auf mehr Zeit, um sich – nach außen – lange genug überlegt zu haben, ob er diesen Käufer akzeptiert. Denn unter Mallorquinern spielt das Prestige des Verkäufers eine große Rolle, was auch für die Preisfindung erheblich ist. (Mallorca, ein Jahr 231; original italics)

[You won't be able to make any Mallorcan you are not acquainted with or who is not your friend admit he has some intention to sell or mediate in anything. This often leads to misunderstandings in sales negotiations, as foreign buyers think that the Mallorcan seller wants more money. Actually, he just wants to buy time to consider whether to accept the buyer, because among Majorcans the prestige of the seller plays an important role, which is also significant for the price.]

In addition, *Mallorca, ein Jahr* also makes constant references to places of interest and descriptions, many of them outside the typical tourist circuits. At the beginning of the narration, the authors include a map of the island where the main attractions of Mallorca are indicated, in a travel guide fashion. In the following quote, the authors describe how to get to Valldemossa and what to see there:

An Santa María vorbei, Bunyola rechts liegen lassend, waren sie vor Esporles, Richtung Valldemossa, ins Gebirge hochgefahren [...] Die Kartause von Valldemossa mit ihrem breiten Kirchenschiff und dem kleinen Turm aus sandfarbenem Maresstein überragte die Häuser des Ortes, die sich unten an die mächtigen Mauern anlehnten. (*Mallorca, ein Jahr* 39)

[Passing Santa María, leaving Bunyola on the right, they climbed up into the mountains leaving Esporles behind and heading towards Valldemossa [...] The Charterhouse of Valldemossa, with its wide nave and small tower made

of mares sandstone, towered over the houses of the town below against the mighty walls.]

Breloer and Schauhoff's novel illustrates very well the hybrid character of the amenity texts on Mallorca, as its romance plot is interrupted very often by the introduction of useful information about the culture and places of interest for the German tourist visiting the island. They even include a short glossary of Spanish and Mallorcan terms, with their translation into German, at the end of the book.

The integration of the Spanish and Mallorcan cultures in German amenity novels is getting more evident in recent years, always conditioned by the amount of knowledge each author has. This allows for spaces of reflection and intercultural dialogue that contribute both to relativise some stereotypes on Mallorca and to reinforce or create others. For instance, an incorrect use of Spanish and the Mallorcan dialect can occasionally be observed, as well as incoherences that reveal the author's lack of linguistic and intellectual accuracy when collecting and organising the information. Notorious examples of this are when Milana portrays controversial Mallorcan banker Juan March as Catalan-born (211) or when Breloer and Schauhoff fuse into one two well-known Spanish songs by Joan Manuel Serrat and Julio Iglesias (296). However, this does not seem to affect the consumption of this kind of literature, which can afford certain liberties that would be unthinkable in other literary genres. And despite the fact that authors often lack a deep knowledge of the local culture and tend to reproduce stereotypes, these narratives offer the possibility to update the public image of the island, working as publicity texts and hidden travel guides often unnoticed by tourist agents. These fictions focus mainly on offering an exciting lifestyle, though set in a relaxed, rural world far away from urban concerns: a kind of *Dolce Vita* or *Deutsche Vita* in Mallorca. This has a parallel in novels produced in the anglophone context, as shall be discussed in the next section.

4. Amenity Writing in English

Anglophone fiction set in Mallorca has been well documented since the 1950s, including mainly murder mystery novels and thrillers by bestselling authors who can be perceived as precursors of the trend, such

as Brian Moore (1921-1999), who wrote *A Bullet for My Lady* (1955) and *Murder in Majorca* (1957) while living on the island, and Roderic Jeffries (b.1926), a Port de Pollença resident since 1972 and author of more than 160 novels, thirty-seven of them with Mallorcan settings. As stated before, the role of the Balearics as a source of inspiration for travellers and writers emerged long before the end of the twentieth century; however, as in the German case, fiction produced for mass consumption by amenity migrants and with the features we are discussing has experienced a boom since 2000. These narratives share a portrayal of Mallorca as paradise through many passages that contain descriptions of place and customs in a travel-guide fashion, while also attempting a dialogue between cultures by making characters from the authors' cultural background interact with locals in the island.

As in fiction in German, English crime fiction or *noir* stands as a highly productive trend in amenity writing on Mallorca. But another bestselling trend nowadays is the travel book, which also deserves attention here, as it is the narrative form that most closely resembles the travel guide. Two authors stand out today as bestselling travel writers on Mallorca: Scottish Peter Kerr and English Anna Nicholas, both residents on the island in the last decades and authors of a number of books on their experiences. Thus, Kerr has authored five narratives between 2000 and 2006 about the three years he spent with his family in a Calvià village, whereas freelance journalist Nicholas has published six books between 2007 and 2016 about her leaving London with her husband and son in search of a less stressful life in rural Sóller. As travel narratives, these texts refer explicitly to Mallorca in their titles, thus contributing to the promotion of tourism in the island, and the topos of Mallorca as paradise is often made explicit from the beginning. In Kerr's first book, for example, titled *Snowball Oranges: One Mallorcan Winter* (2000), a quote from French writer George Sand's *A Winter in Majorca* is used as an epigraph to the whole narrative:

For Majorca is one of the most
beautiful places on Earth...
Like a green Helvetia
Under a Calabrian sky,
With the solemnity and silence
Of the Orient. (7)

In his second book, *One Mallorcan Summer* (2001), a similar epigraph refers to Mallorca as “the island of calm” (7) in a quote from Catalan writer Santiago Rusiñol’s *L’illa de la calma* (1913). In a similar vein, Nicholas’s narratives also contain a recurrent celebration of Mallorca’s beautiful landscapes, which is accompanied, nonetheless, by humorous references to common stereotypes such as those of Mallorcan procrastination and relaxed lifestyle, also present in Kerr’s texts and valued positively by both authors: “Foolishly, we had not reckoned on Mallorca *mañana* time which means you arrive within an hour or so of the time you originally agreed” (Nicholas, *A Lizard in my Luggage* 15; original italics), “I too am falling under the spell of *mañana, mañana*” (Nicholas, *A Lizard in my Luggage* 181; original italics); “‘You know what I think?’ [my wife] murmured, ‘I think you’ve finally learned how to be *tranquilo*. And I like it. It’s, well...nice’” (Kerr, *Snowball Oranges* 314; original italics).

Another prominent feature shared by Kerr and Nicholas, and certainly to be expected in travel writing, is that both include in their narratives useful descriptions of Mallorcan geography, traditions, gastronomy and even history, which are explained to an anglophone readership who might like to visit the island. Thus, the texts promote Mallorcan culture by describing local recipes (Kerr, *Snowball Oranges* 97), Christmas traditions (Nicholas, *A Lizard in my Luggage* 234) and local festivities and traditions (Nicholas, *A Cat on a Hot Tiled Roof* 40; Kerr, *One Mallorcan Summer* 306). By inserting these references, the authors act as cultural mediators and even ethnographers, translating a way of life to an international audience, sometimes literally through the fusion of English and Spanish in many sentences – very frequent in Kerr’s narratives – or English and the Mallorcan dialect – more noticeable in Nicholas.

Their commercial success is self-evident in the numerous reprints and editions that can be found – Kerr even won the American Book of the Year Award in the category of travel writing – which highlights their role as privileged consumer products today. The search for authenticity and a simpler lifestyle stands as a frequent justification in these books, in consonance with a common motivation among amenity migrants for the defense of the natural environment (Moss, “Beyond Tourism” 124). Thus, allusions to “the real Mallorca, the pre-tourist-boom Mallorca” (*One Mallorcan Summer* 310) are frequent in Kerr’s narratives, while

in Nicholas we can observe a strong identification with Mallorcan traditional culture, to such an extent that she claims Mallorca as her home, in contrast to an alienating, stressful London she rejects:

the trappings of city life [...] now seem so alien to me. I'm missing a soft sky pregnant with stars, chanting cicadas and the smell of jasmine floating on the breeze. [...] Suddenly I want to be back home, [...] in our simple, white walled room with its gnarled beams and shutters, with the balmy, fragrant mountain air seeping through the bedroom shutters and fluttering about the sheets. [...] My family now feels like it belongs there, back on Mallorca, and tonight in London I feel like a lone tourist, in search of some guidebook to help me make sense of my life here again. (*A Lizard in my Luggage* 39-40)

Passages like this and an overall reflective tone connect her books with the self-help genre, another prominent consumer product in the contemporary literary market that adds depth to her narratives, producing hybrid texts whose merging of conventions makes classification difficult. Nicholas's frequent references to the "authenticity" of Mallorcan life are accompanied by a criticism of certain attitudes among her own nationals while visiting the island which reinforce the stereotype of the self-centred, unconcerned British resident:

‘Sometimes I think I'm too old in the tooth for learning a new language.’ [said Anna's husband].

‘Not at all,’ says Pep kindly. ‘You do admirably well. Think of all the lazy English living for years in Mallorca who don't bother to learn a word. You should be proud of yourself, *mi amic*.’ (*A Lizard in my Luggage* 112; original italics)

As stated before, the most prominent form of amenity literature on Mallorca is crime fiction. It is perhaps no surprise that both Kerr and Nicholas have also published detective novels set in Mallorca as a new direction in their careers. Like the crime narratives in German, this fiction can be included within the growing trend called regional or provincial *noir*, which emerged in English in the 1970s and 1980s.

Kerr's *The Mallorca Connection* (2006) is the first in a trilogy on a Scottish detective who solves mysteries in different parts of the world. The promotion of the island is clear from the beginning: not only does the title refer explicitly to Mallorca, but also the cover of the most recent edition (2012) shows a photo of a well-known, beautiful fishing village on the east coast of the island, Cala Figuera, usually packed with tourists in summer. Furthermore, the inclusion of numerous passages highlighting the exoticism and beauty of specific Mallorcan places allows us to align this novel with the texts explored so far, as it reinforces an iconic view of the island as paradise:

Julie's senses were feasting on the heady Mediterranean atmosphere as she gazed from the balcony over the dark expanse of Camp de Mar bay, on which a sprinkling of boat lights twinkled among reflections of the stars. 'Isn't it wonderful?' she sighed. 'Ah-h-h, it's so... romantic!' (*The Mallorca Connection* 161)

In a similar vein, Nicholas's detective novel *The Devil's Horn* (2019) introduces a young local woman, Isabel Flores, working hand in hand with a local inspector to solve a crime, in a new "femicrime" set in Mallorca that fuses the travel guide – through numerous references to gastronomy, geography and traditions – with a suspense plot about drug trafficking.

A relevant crime novelist and amenity migrant is George Scott, a resident in Binissalem since the 1980s and owner of two boutique hotels until his death in 2013. He authored the bestseller *The Bloody Bokhara* (1999) and its sequel *The Chewed Caucasian* (2001), both featuring hotel owner Will Stock as the protagonist. His novels are full of descriptions of Mallorcan culture and geography, as well as reflections on the Mallorcan character and even directions on how to reach certain places in the island, in a travel guide fashion:

If you are touring, and decide to go by road, take the old, free, serpentine road up over the 500 metre sidehills to the valley, curving back and forth more than thirty times before reaching Soller itself. Coming back, when you're tired out by walking round, the new toll tunnel

is probably a better option, as it cuts under the hills and saves time and driving effort. (*The Bloody Bokhara* 71)

Some crime narratives come close to the thriller and are produced by seasonal residents in Mallorca. Such is the case of Geoffrey Iley's *Navegator* (2012), whose plot is focused on an international technological scheme involving a Mallorcan academic who moves often between different locations in the island, thus providing faithful descriptions of its geography and most idiosyncratic places. A more recent text which has been widely publicised in Britain is *Death in Deià* (2019) by Englishman David Coubrough, about a murder to be solved in the middle of the Mallorcan village of Deià. In these novels action occupies center stage; however, it is often accompanied by frequent allusions to local geography and culture which reveal the authors' knowledge of – and fondness for – the island, thus performing the additional function of a travel guide. This can be observed when a character in Coubrough's novel recommends Deià and a well-known restaurant there:

“You'll enjoy Deià, the final resting place of Robert Graves.” [...] “I'll take you for lunch at La Residencia tomorrow, they've got a lovely restaurant on the terrace looking down at the valley and out to sea. We could share one of their paellas, full of prawns and mussels, and we'll wash it down with a nice bottle of Rioja. What could be better?” (*Death in Deià* 137-138)

The power of these texts to attract tourists is, therefore, huge, as readers become curious about the setting of the narrative and even get useful information about where and what to eat before travelling to Mallorca.

One relevant genre often cultivated today within anglophone fiction is the romance. Although there is a growing body of romance fiction in English set in Mallorca, and the form can be said to have a lot of vitality, very little of it has been written by amenity migrants, as most authors have been just occasional visitors or tourists for short periods of time. One notable exception is journalist and award-winning blogger Emily Benet, a resident in Mallorca for several years and author of *The Hen Party* (2017) and *Tipping Point* (2020), among a number of other narratives with different settings and topics. In line with the texts seen so

far, her two novels set in Mallorca offer descriptions of local geography and some degree of intercultural interaction. However, the plots do not focus so much on the intercultural experience as on the relationships between the British protagonists, who are depicted in a light-hearted tone especially in *The Hen Party*, in which the filming of a British TV reality show on the island ends up in total disaster.

All in all, it is significant that these narratives do not resort to stereotypes in a sustained way but mainly reflect on them humorously, for example, in the view of Mallorcans as lazy procrastinators or that of the drunk Briton in Magaluf, which often contributes to their questioning or at least to their relativisation. As in the German texts, language mistakes can also be observed in many of them when they attempt to reproduce Spanish and particularly Mallorcan terms and phrases. However, this lack of linguistic accuracy, which may suggest carelessness or lack of knowledge on the part of the author, does not seem to be relevant for their readership, as their target audience is, as happens with travel guides in foreign languages, their own nationals and not Spanish readers.

5. Conclusions

This article contends that a new literary trend that can be called “amenity literature” or “amenity writing” has emerged in the last decades. Although more research would be necessary in order to apply the concept to other locations in the world, it has been analysed here in connection with the important number of amenity migrants living in Mallorca since the late twentieth century. It can even be said that amenity writing set in Mallorca is experiencing a boom in recent years, a fact related to the increasing dominance of genre fiction in the literary markets, which has turned literature, more than ever, into a product for consumption.

In the previous sections we have discussed the main features of the new trend as observed in narratives published in English and German, the German and anglophone communities having been the most numerous amenity migrant groups in the Balearics for decades. We have attempted to identify a number of common characteristics in terms of concerns, genres and audiences, the most significant being the

hybrid nature of the texts, as they fuse different genres and conventions in innovative ways, combining, first and foremost, the contents expected in a travel guide with the conventions of genres such as the cookery book, the autobiographical travel narrative, the regional crime novel – sometimes even the rural *noir* – the thriller, the romance and, in some cases, the self-help book. Thus, as postmodern and polysemic cultural products, these texts are built as hybrid, compositional frameworks where all kinds of topics and discourses are inserted like narrative experiments. The result is a diversity of texts whose point in common is the role of the author as mediator between two cultures, in a similar way to what we would find in a guide book or travel guide. It could even be said there is a strong emotional bond between the authors and the settings chosen, which does not mean the former are perfectly integrated in the host culture. Rather, they attempt integration through writing, by mediating between the two worlds and occasionally reproducing or reinforcing certain stereotypes about the host culture or their own community.

The celebration of local culture and rural Mallorca is another major characteristic connected with a common attitude among amenity migrants: the search for authenticity, which seems to spring from a concern about the preservation of the natural environment. Indeed, it is significant that the city of Palma, with its 400,000 inhabitants and multicultural composition, is barely described and often ignored in these narratives. Furthermore, the audiences these texts appeal to are mainly nationals or speakers of the authors' own language either planning their journey to Mallorca or wanting to revive past experiences on the island – thus combining pleasure and information – or potential tourists who might be encouraged to travel by reading the texts. This explains why these books are often found in transition places such as airport bookshop and even souvenir shops.

Interestingly, in the case of German texts they are seldom translated into other languages, which might be a consequence of their poor literary quality or the limited scope of their plots. However, as has been argued, they have an added value, as they function indirectly as publicity tools that fulfil the main aims of tourism marketing. Hence, they contain not only fiction but also useful information about the tourist destination, revealing places of great beauty and describing local customs, traditions and even cuisine to the reader interested in Mallorca.

In contrast to the German texts, some of the travel narratives in English have had a greater international impact, sometimes with translations into other languages (e.g., some authored by Kerr and Nicholas). This interesting difference can be interpreted as a consequence of the greater internationalisation of the anglophone literary market, whose consumer products have a bigger presence in the global economy. In any case, the language and cultural mistakes that some of the texts contain make them inadequate for a Spanish or Mallorcan readership but do not prevent them from achieving success in their own niche market: that of speakers of the authors' own language. Nevertheless, there is little doubt about the vitality of the trend, as dozens of amenity novels are published every year about Mallorca by amenity migrants, among the most recent ones Roland Winterstein's *Mariposa [Butterfly]* (2020), Anna Nicholas's second crime novel *Haunted Magpie* (2020) or Carmen Bellmonte's *Zeiten des Wandels: Die Mallorca-Saga [Times of Change: The Mallorca-Saga]* (2022), which reveals the emergence of a new hybrid subgenre within the trend: the family saga.

Notes

¹ The first travel guide to Spain and Portugal was published in German by Karl Baedeker in 1897 and it was the best known internationally at the turn of the century. The English edition was published a year later, in 1898.

² One prominent writer among these pioneers, though related to another culture, is French novelist George Sand (1804-1876), who moved to Mallorca in 1838 with her partner, the Polish composer Frédéric Chopin, in search of favourable weather conditions for the artist's delicate health. Sand, a pen name for Amantine Lucile Aurore Dupin, left an important testimony in French of their stay in the island through her travelogue *Un hiver à Majorque [A Winter in Mallorca]* (1841), where she offered a negative account of Mallorcans as too conservative and opposed to her advanced, feminist views and her masculine way of dressing. Chopin's health did not really improve during their stay, which led to her growing frustration in the island.

³ He lived in Mallorca from the early 1870s to 1914, when he was forced to return to Austria at the outbreak of World War I. He died in the war one year later.

⁴ It is significant that Herding uses a Spanish name as her pseudonym, Lucía de la Vega, because, as she explains, a Spanish name is good for sales (Kreye 4).

⁵ The series, featuring local detective Inspector Alvarez as the protagonist, was initiated with *Mistakenly in Mallorca* (1974) and its last title to date was published in 2013.

⁶ In 2017 Nicholas was awarded the prestigious Silver Siurell, an award given by the Balearic Association for Rural Tourism (ABATI) for her promotion of the Balearics in the United Kingdom.

⁷ In some of the texts we could even talk about rural *noir*, a trend emerging in the new millennium which rejects urban settings and the traditional detective as the protagonist (Eppes).

⁸ Kerr has also produced a historical novel set in medieval Mallorca, *Song of the Eight Winds: Reconquista* (2012).

⁹ We are referring here to novels such as Emma Straub's *The Vacationers* (2014), Helen Walsh's *The Lemon Grove* (2014) or Elise Darcy's *A Mallorcan Affair* (2019). These narratives usually focus on the troubled relationships of anglophone holidaymakers during their stay on the island.

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