

AURORA BERTRANA: BRINGING “OTHERNESS” HOME

PILAR GODAYOL
Universitat de Vic

“Decidida a viure al preu que sigui” underscores contemporary writer Maria-Antònia Oliver in her prologue to Aurora Bertrana’s fourth book, *El Marroc sensual i fanàtic* (1936). The urge to travel, to explore the world and to slake her thirst for new experiences shaped much of the personality and the work of this Girona-born writer. Taking her own travels as a starting point, Bertrana distinguished herself in the genre of travel writing on exotic countries, which at that time underwent a significant revival in Catalonia. Bertrana’s originality lies partly in the image of the woman traveller that she consciously cultivated for herself, and partly in the way she narrates her travels. This article seeks to recover this author and make visible her singular way of presenting otherness.

KEY WORDS: Aurora Bertrana, otherness, travel writing.

One of the most influential and controversial texts in Cultural Criticism, which considers the role of the intellectual when faced with the object of knowledge and his/her relation with the formation of languages which collude in repression, was the celebrated article, based on a talk given in 1983, which the Indian literary critic Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak published in 1988, “Can the Subaltern Speak?”. Ten years later, in an interview at Columbia University (October 29 1993), Spivak reiterated her belief that it is impossible to hear the other since someone else always speaks on her behalf or for her. She says that the following (Landry and Maclean, 1996: 292): “So, ‘the subaltern cannot speak’, means that even when the subaltern makes an effort to the death to speak, she is not able to be heard, and speaking and hearing complete the speech act. That’s what it had meant, and anguish marked the spot”.

According to Spivak, and much of postcolonial criticism (Sommer, 1995; Budick and Iser, 1996), the place occupied by the other is untranslatable, is

beyond communication, and any practice aiming to rescue the colonised subject from her silence will inevitably repeat the act of colonisation –the construction of a subjectivity that is different always reaffirms the narcissism of the "I"–, even when reconciliation seems to be within reach. In this sense Edward W. Said, who does not fully share the metanarrative of Spivak's project, distinguishes two essentialist ways of justifying the approach to the other (1989: 212): "The histories, traditions, societies, texts of 'others' are seen either as responses to Western initiatives –and therefore passive, dependent– or as domains of culture that belong mainly to 'native' elites". Both these positions are based on the isolating of the other. They reinforce the traditional mystery of difference. They construct unassailable walls between that which is known and that which is unknown, between the coloniser and the colonised.

In no case is it a question of identifying the complete essence of otherness but rather considering the ways in which social, economic and power practices intervene in the production, distribution and consumption of their cultural value, and of validating some ideological criteria over others. To isolate otherness, as if its representation was to be found outside the realms of social interaction and conflict, risks undermining all efforts at exchange between the cultural subject and object.

This article deals with literature and travel and sets out to examine those moments of contact and contagion between languages and cultures, and their paradoxes, what Gloria Anzaldúa calls "borders" (1987), Homi Bhabha "third spaces" (1990) and Mary Louis Pratt "contact zones" (1992). The borders, third spaces and contact zones celebrate hybridism, non static identities and individuals in constant transition. They look at the relations between the colonizers and the colonized, the travellers and the natives, as expressed by Pratt (1992: 7) "not in terms of separateness or apartheid, but in terms of copresence, interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power". The Catalan writer Aurora Bertrana (1892-1974) knows about (un)crossable colonial borders and contaminated cultural relationships. To some extent, her life and her works invite us to think about the problems and contradictions of these spaces and the ways in which we can textually (re)construct the otherness.

"Decidida a viure al preu que sigui", according to the contemporary writer Maria-Antònia Oliver in her preface to Aurora Bertrana's fourth book, *El Marroc sensual i fanàtic* (1936). The urge to travel, to explore the world, to slake her thirst for new experiences, and to live life to the full, shaped much of the personality and the work of this Girona-born writer. In her books she appears as an enthusiast, an enterprising woman, curious and critical, a lover of life, a rebel and a free spirit. However, for many men and women of her time she was domineering, surly and unfriendly, even unfeminine. Yet it is clear that in addition to her narrative and travel writing, she lived a highly eventful life: she travelled round the islands of Oceania, and all over America, Africa and Europe, played in a Ladies' Orchestra in Barcelona, formed a quartet with three girlfriends in Geneva and played the cello in Alpine hotels

with the first women's jazz band in Europe. Politically of the left¹, and an outspoken defender of the rights of women², she spoke in public meetings and published numerous articles in contemporary magazines such as *L'Opinió*, *Mirador*, *La Humanitat* and *La Veu de Catalunya*. She fell in love several times before marrying the engineer Monsieur Chauffat in 1925, and she travelled to Tahiti with him, where he had signed a contract with a Frenchman who wanted to set up an electric power station in Papeete. After a lengthy voyage, they finally arrived in the tropics in September 1926.

Drunk on the colours, silences, harmonies and sensations, she began to write articles for the magazine *D'Ací i d'Allà* –“Of here and of there” (*Papeete moderna* –“Modern Papeete”, *Fantasmes reials* –“Royal Ghosts”, *Raiatea 'La Sagrada'* –“Raiatea 'The Sacred'” and *El maridatge d'Hamné* –“Hamné's Wedding”), in the hope of turning them one day into a novel. From her sojourn in Papeete, came *Paradisos oceànics*, suggested by the publisher Proa in order to make the fascinatingly different world of Polynesia accessible to the public. It was published in an attractive format and sold out in just two weeks, even though it cost fifteen pesetas. It was not only a literary but also a commercial success –the work had a big impact on the conservative Barcelona of that time, a city that believed itself to be truly cosmopolitan and yet was scandalised by Bertrana's unashamed descriptions of the bodies and sexual practices of the natives.

In *Paradisos oceànics* Bertrana highlighted two of the attributes of otherness. On the one hand, there was the fascination, at times naïve, for the Orient, for its mystery and the exotic nature of the lands and peoples. Bertrana writes (1993: 32-33): “Les nits polinèsies... encant indescriptible, embriaguesa de colors i d'harmonies” or “El sentiment de la bellesa, l'equilibri i la distinció són les característiques d'aquesta raça interessant”. On the other hand, there was a more ambiguous fascination, which at times turned into compulsive rejection, for everything that was irrational, savage, darkly disordered, dirty and primitive. Bertrana's description of the Anamite women is typical:

Van pobrament vestides, amb les tradicionals calces marrons i l'armilla blanca, brutes, escabellades i cobertes amb un gran capell en forma de bolet. Si hi passeu a la vora us somriuran; però llur somris és encara misterios, més trist i més repugnant que llur aspecte, car porten totes les dents cobertes de laca negra. És per luxe? Per tradició? Per higiene? No ho sé pas; fecunds i deformes

¹ In 1933 Aurora Bertrana stood in the elections for the Congress of the Spanish Republic as a candidate for Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya. However, she was not elected.

² During the years 1937 and 1938, she collaborated on the magazine *Companya* – founded during the Civil War, linked to the PSUC and the *Aliança Nacional de la Dona Jove* (the National Alliance of Young Women), edited by women and aimed at anti-facist women readers.

sota la brutícia dels vestits, són la sola nota desentonant en l'harmonia d'aquest lloc delectable. (Bertrana, 1993: 29)

The other is irrationality, deformity, a discordant note in a landscape where all is fascinating, seductive, delightful. The other is the stranger, the foreigner. But what is most surprising is Bertrana's complete lack of involvement in the narrative. She contemplates and describes, converting the other into a mere object of study, of little knowledge and completely passive, with whom there can be no dialogue. In one passage Bertrana describes how the American millionaire Zane Grey films the natives fishing and performing a religious fire ceremony. The victim of colonisation poses before the colonialis't's camera and plays out a scripted farce. The author seems to question the authenticity of the representations, the position from which Grey observes. She even permits herself the luxury of being ironic, noting (1993: 114): “The legendary and poetic Maori past, their traditions, religion, Gods and their miracles, all have succumbed to the power of the Dollar!”. However, she does not question her own position, does not reflect on the place from which she looks on, from which she speaks. It is as if she does not form part of the world she describes, that she remains untainted by external influences or contagions, that her “I” is immobile, bereft of critical, and self-critical, faculties. It seems, as Neus Carbonell puts it (1997: 60), “[...] com si no s'hagués mogut mai, com si el viatge no hagués començat mai”.

Mary Louise Pratt presents two concepts in *Imperial eyes. Travel Writing and Transculturation* (1992) which, to some extent, fit in perfectly with the position of the European bourgeois subject that Bertrana adopts in *Paradisos oceànics*. On one hand, Pratt introduces the concept of the “anti-conquest” whereby she describes the representation strategies that dominant subjects adopt in order to guarantee their innocence while at the same time reinforcing the European hegemony. Pratt calls the protagonist of these innocence strategies “seeing man”, “the European male subject of European landscape discourse whose imperial eyes passively look out and possess” (1992: 7). Even though Bertrana, throughout her life, moves towards a third space, a contact zone, or an ideological border, she is really a “seeing woman” in *Paradisos oceànics*, a person who possesses the other, rather than making contact with him, and therefore doesn't enjoy or suffer from cultural interactions.

Shirley Foster and Sara Mills (2002: 7) state that “although women could and did speak with an imperialist voice, their relationship to colonialism as a whole was more problematic than for men”. This was not, originally, the case of Bertrana. Over time she questioned the innocent strategies she had used in her early works and she built up and developed a less androcentric and more autocritical relationship with the other. In the 1970s, four decades after its publication, Bertrana declared that *Paradisos oceànics* was an adolescent

work. To put it in her own words (Bertrana, 1973: 739-740): “Potser hi manca malícia i esperit crític. Potser hi sobra candor i entusiasme”.

In any case, even though there were later to be other articles, novels, stories and memoirs, the appearance of this book sent ripples of shock through the conservative Catalunya of the early 20th century. It was highly unusual for a young woman to set off with her husband for eastern Polynesia, to live there for three years, to document her experiences and to write a book about them, a book which, in addition, criticised the colonialism of the times and defended Rousseau's vision of human relations³.

Her life led Aurora Bertrana to specialise in the genre of travel books dealing with exotic countries, a style of writing that underwent an important revival in Catalan literature during the early decades of the 20th century⁴. Josep Carner had only recently translated *Robinson Crusoe* (1925) while Nicolau M. Rubió i Tudurí had just published *Caceres a l'Àfrica tropical* (1926)⁵. In 1933 she published a revised version of *Paradisos oceànics* in Castilian, with the help of Emili Oliver, at that time a member of the staff of the *La Vanguardia*. The title of this version was *Islas de ensueño* (“The Islands of Dreams”) and it was published by Ediciones Populares Iberia. Between 1929 and 1935 she wrote travel and descriptive articles for *Mirador*, *La Publicitat*, *La Nau*, *D'Ací i d'Allà*, *L'Opinió*, *La Rambla*, *Claror*, *Bondat / Bonté* and *El Día*, published in Palma de Mallorca. In 1934 the publisher Balagué brought out her second travel book, *Peikea, princesa caníbal i altres contes oceànics*, a group of stories which mixed the legends and mysteries of the Pacific islands, with her own experiences and memories, coloured by a pessimistic view of the impact of the arrival of white people. It is in this book that one becomes aware of a Bertrana who starts to question herself about the difficulties that arise from (not) being able to identify with the “other”, who comes to understand that all societies organise themselves,

³ Aurora Bertrana shares Rousseau's philosophical theory, as well as the Christian ideals of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre in *Pau i Virgínia*, in which harmony with nature confers on people a beatific calm.

⁴ Aurora Bertrana was to become the only woman writer to deal with Oceania in the cultural context of that time. We only have important precedent of a travel book written by a woman in Catalan: *Viatge a l'Orient* (“Travels in the Orient”) (recently reissued by Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 1998) by the Mallorca woman writer Maria-Antònia Salvà (1869-1958). Apart from being the only woman to publish works on Polynesia in Catalan, Bertrana also gave numerous talks and lectures on the Society Islands for various audiences in different Catalan towns and cities. For example, on 4 November 1930 she spoke on “Educational and instructive travel” at the *Ateneu Barcelonès*; on 24 April 1931 on “Women and travel” at the Centre Excursionista de Terrassa; or on 29 May 1931 on “The islands of Polynesia” at the *Ateneu de Girona*.

⁵ Known above all as a poet, Josep Carner with his translations of works from various languages (his diplomatic career allowed him to travel throughout Europe and America) he contributed enormously to the consolidation of the modern Catalan language. Architect by profession, Nicolau M. Rubió i Tudurí combined the work of Director of Public Parks in Barcelona with writing. Apart from producing treatises on architecture and theatre, he brought out a collection describing his experiences in Africa, where he hunted big game, in *Caceres a l'Àfrica tropical* (1926), *Sahara-Níger* (1932), *Chasses et camping dans la brousse africaine* (1945) and *Viatges i caceres a l'Àfrica negra* (1960).

resolve their difficulties and meet their needs each in their own way, claiming in the end that the superiority of the white man leads only to the destruction of any possibility of interchange with the "other".

In 1935 Aurora Bertrana she set off alone for Morocco. Apart from the period she spent in the desert, the oases, the mountains and the forests, she also visited Tetuan, Rabat, Fez and Casablanca. Her journey ended in Marrakech. From there she returned to Catalunya and, using as her base the travel notes she had made and the articles and chronicles that had appeared in *La Publicitat*, she began to write her last work of travel writing *El Marroc sensual i fanàtic*, which was published in April 1936. The book is written with the grace and the immediacy of a person who has lived the smells, the colours and the idiosyncracies of the country. Bertrana opened herself to the charm of that which was unknown and unfamiliar. She let herself be transported by the passion that flowed from difference, and she communicates it to us with fluency, intelligence and with just a pinch of irony. It is not a "feminist" book, though it is crammed full of descriptions, insinuations and comments that make clear the author's beliefs with regard to equality, and her participation in the struggle for women's rights. In the chapter "Presó de dones" she writes:

En escriure el mot llibertat no puc menys que somriure. Evoco la vida social femenina musulmana i no comprenc ja més presons que aquelles pregoneres i fosques estances on les dones, sovint tanca-des amb clau, broden, badallen, sospiren i xafardeigen amb les serventes o amb les amigues. (Bertrana, 1992: 102)

Similarly, in the chapter entitled "*Les quatre dones del baixà*" she notes (1992: 71): "Ell, amb tota la seva importància, està satisfet de poder demostrar a la periodista europea que un baixà marroquí té prou prestigi i prou diners per a lluir casa i femelles de primer ordre". In the last chapter Bertrana explains that she turned down the invitation of the Lord of Taurirt to spend a few days at his home. No doubt if she had accepted the Kaid's invitation, which promised a comfortable bed, flavoursome dishes cooked with saffron and other spices, and dancing and singing women, her notes and comments on the lives of the slaves, the women, the concubines and their offspring that the palace housed would have been even richer. As Bertrana herself admits on the last page of the book, "[s]i hagués romàs, aquesta crònica fóra certament més interessant" (1992: 253).

The question of otherness is dealt with in a different way in *El Marroc sensual i fanàtic*. In the last few pages of *Tristes tropiques* (1955) by Claude Lévi-Strauss, the ethnographer argues that in order to avoid adopting a position of superiority with regard to the other it is necessary to maintain a critical distance, evading, in this way, making any kind of judgement. Said, on the other hand, insists that the attitude in the face of the "other" must

involve the willingness to break with binary conceptions, to open new spaces of communication between cultures, perhaps to negotiate, to speak and to listen in a different way:

If we think of cultures as permeable and, on the whole, defensive boundaries between polities, a more promising situation appears. Thus to see Others not as ontologically given but as historically constituted would be to erode the exclusivist biases we so often ascribe to cultures, our own not least. Cultures may then be represented as zones of control or of abandonment, of recollection and of forgetting, of force or of dependence, of exclusiveness or of sharing, all taking place in the global history that is our element. Exile, immigration, and the crossing of boundaries are experiences that can therefore provide us with new narrative forms or, in John Berger's phrase, with other ways of telling. (Said, 1989: 225)

For Said, those who create boundaries maintain their integrity by differentiating themselves and their space from that which lies beyond their limits, at the same time expelling all signs of strangeness from their territory. For the person who dwells on the inside, everything that is from outside is strange and foreign. The exclusion of these distorting elements and their banishment to alien lands is then the way of maintaining the power of insiders and legitimising its expression. Contrary to those who see borderlands as arid and unsafe areas, Said claims that it is only in these borderland situations that the best cultural interchanges are produced. Only those who have no fear of occupying indeterminate positions and who celebrate the opportunity to travel, evolve, mutate, metamorphose, adopt new "disguises" and abandon fixed identities, only those people live with the knowledge that they are neither inside nor outside.

The position of Aurora Bertrana with regard to the other evolves from her Lévi-Strauss-like posture in *Paradissos oceànics* to that of a *frontera* much closer to Said in *El Marroc sensual i fanàtic*, where the author situates herself alongside the "other" allowing a dialogue, her dialogue, unique and untransferable, to emerge. *El Marroc sensual i fanàtic* is a book that is subtle, full of irony, and with many telling brush-strokes, a book in which Bertrana truly involves herself. From the outset, in the colophon (in contrast, *Paradissos Oceànics* does not contain an introduction), the author breaks her silence, sets out to involve her "I" in the narrative, and to begin her journey alongside the other, with no fear, with no resistance. She says: "Durant la confecció d'aquesta obra, no de viatges sinó d'impressions viatgeres, he dubtat sovint entre amagar l'anècdota personal o ofrenar-vos-la neta i clara, sincera i absoluta. Ha guanyat la darrera de les opinions" (Bertrana 1992, 20). Bertrana renounced her critical distance, her non-involvement, so indispensable for Lévi-Strauss (1992: 20): "Si el meu llibre tingués la pre-

tensió d'afegir un ensenyament nou, geogràfic, antropològic o etnogràfic a la vasta literatura nord-africana, faria nosa tot el que fa referència a les actuacions i emocions personals. No és així". And she ends by reiterating the impossibility of constructing an objective object of knowledge, untainted by the influences of her "I" (1992: 20): "Totes les meves pretensions literàries es limiten a la pintura dels paisatges i dels monuments vistos pels meus ulls profans, curiosos i àvids de viatgera inlassable, i a la descripció dels tipus que s'han creuat al meu camí, dibuixats a través de les meves reaccions sentimentals i intel·lectuals".

Nevertheless, it is not easy to unlearn the paternalistic habits of western eyes and to stop oneself explaining to the other what s/he should do and how s/he should behave; in short, to accept difference for what it is. Despite her fervent eagerness to allow herself to become impregnated by the other, Aurora Bertrana in *El Marroc sensual i fanàtic*, as well as in *Paradisos oceànics*, expresses her discomfort in the face of some expressions of indigenous nature. For example, on one occasion a Moroccan invites her to take tea in his house and she cannot help expressing the aversion she feels:

Ell mateix prepara el te, amb la solemnitat de consuetud, però en el més paorós dels silencis. He de beure'n tres vasos en un atuell greixós, entelat, en el qual, abans que jo, ha begut tota la família. Resisteixo heroicament (el mot no és exagerat) no solament la brutícia i el mal humor de l'amo, sinó les mil picors i pessigolles, veritables i imaginàries, que van cames amunt, cames avall, sota el meu vestit de fil. Ho aguanto tot. Estic disposada al turment per presentar als llegidors una imatge verídica de moro. I a fe que la que ara us ofreno no és de les menys interessants. Veieu aquell rostre barbut i mal carat, sota el voluminós turbant, i l'ull immòbil, clavat en mi, i els llavis closos, menyspreadors... (Bertrana, 1992: 82)

It is not always easy to try to get to know the other. Even though Bertrana's attitude in the face of the other includes a willingness to approach and to speak (for both herself and her readers), there are moments when she rejects and distances herself from the other for not being like her, for being so different. Thus, on one occasion she describes a dance of a Muslim sect, the *Hamatxes*, and concludes: "Tot plegat comença a ser repugnant" (Bertrana, 1992: 67). The tensions between the eagerness to allow herself to be impregnated by the other and the prejudices of the white woman traveller are palpable in *El Marroc sensual i fanàtic*. The combination of the coordinates of gender and colonisation⁶, that Aurora Bertrana represents, do

⁶ In *El Marroc sensual i fanàtic* the question of colonisation is present and palpable from the beginning to the point that the author states (Bertrana: 1992, 91): "Si no fos més artista que apòstol, dedicaria aquest llibre a la palpitant qüestió colonial". For more information see the article "Gènere, guerra i colonització en l'obra d'Aurora Bertrana" (2001) by Francesca Bartrina.

not help at all in her task. For example, even though the author visits more than one harem, a women's prison and a brothel, it is difficult to enter the space reserved for the Muslim woman for Bertrana transgresses against all that the Orient imagines with respect to the female gender:

Elles em miraven encuriosides, amb desig evident d'interrogar-me. Anhelaven saber com anava vestida *per sota*, quina marca de roig usava, si em tenyia la cabellera [...]. Però tot això m'ho deien solament amb els ulls, car no coneixien altre idioma que l'àrab vulgar, i l'amo era allí, tot jugant negligentment amb els botons i les borles de l'armilla o amb l'aigua del brollador; i, malgrat el seu somriure pacient amarat d'indulgència, elles no gosaven abusar del temps de llur senyor. (Bertrana, 1992: 28)

The sentimental and intellectual reactions of Aurora Bertrana with regard to the other are confused and contradictory, just as is difference itself. And it is in this very confusion and contradiction that we find the great virtue of the book. For when the other forms part "to some degree" of the "I" it always does so in the form of struggle, collision and conflict; that is why it is the other. This is the paradox faced by those who invest their time in looking beyond the "I": if the other is wholly outside the "I", s/he cannot be seen; if s/he is wholly a part of the "I", and thus is visible, s/he is no longer the other. We should then go back to the words of Said according to which otherness can only exist in contagion, in non-binary relations, relations which are multiple and polyphonic, in the experiences of exile and borderlands.

El Marroc sensual i fanàtic would have been one of Bertrana's most successful literary works had it not been for the political and social events that overshadowed its launch and culminated in the tragedy of 18 July 1936, three months after its publication. Despite the painful upsets of the war (Chauffat went over to the "national" controlled area, while she was continually hiding refugees in their home), she continued to participate in literary circles. In June 1938 Aurora Bertrana left Barcelona and fled to Geneva. It was the most precarious and painful period of her life, the time she described herself as living the "life of a parasite". In 1950 she went back once more in her beloved, though repressed, Barcelona. She did not stop writing and her works appeared one after the other: *La ninfa d'argila* (1958), for a children's audience; *Una vida* (1965), the biography of her father; *Ariateia* (1960), dealing with the south seas; *Oviri i sis narracions més* (1965); and the novels *Fracàs* (1966), *Vent de grop* (1967) and *La ciutat dels joves* (1971). Her memoirs were published in two volumes: the first one, in 1973, was awarded the *Serra d'Or* prize by the critics, while the second one, in 1975, appeared one year after her death in hospital in Berga.

In the final pages of *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward W. Said considers the question of migrant people, of those who move from one place to

another, who live permanently on the *frontera*. Said distinguishes two forms of displacement:

There is a great difference, however, between the optimistic mobility, the intellectual liveliness, and the "logic of daring" described by the various theoreticians upon whose work I have drawn, and the massive dislocations, waste, misery, and horrors endured in our century's migrations and mutilated lives. Yet it is no exaggeration to say that liberation as an intellectual mission, born in the resistance and opposition to the confinements and ravages of imperialism, has now shifted from the settled, established, and domesticated dynamics of culture to its unhoused, decentred, and exilic energies, energies whose incarnation today is the migrant, and whose consciousness is that of the intellectual and artist in exile, the political figure between domains, between forms, between homes, between languages. (1994: 403)

According to Said, it is necessary to distinguish between two ways of living social and cultural migration. On the one hand, there is the migration of those who resettle as a result of violence, of forms of cultural or ideological power that lead thousands of migrants, refugees, and nomads to oblivion, tragedy, horror, famine, war and/or extermination. On the other hand, there is, as Said puts it, *optimistic* migration. Whether it be forced or not, this is the fate of a part of the intellectual world. Many thinkers, faced with the cultural repressiveness of the world in which we live, choose to resist the colonising and homogenising attitudes of knowledge, adopting instead erratic and flexible positions.

Aurora Bertrana lived both these forms of displacement, as well as many others. She formed part of the first generation of women intellectuals to gain access to a trade traditionally reserved for men, that of travel writing. She took an active part in social and political life, both in Catalunya and abroad. She participated in actions demanding women's education and emancipation, advocating the ideals of the *Catalan Modernistes*, or denouncing the destructive effects of untamed colonialism, amongst other causes. She acquired a personal commitment to her country and her times that was to lead her into exile. Aurora Bertrana was a traveller and a transgressor, capable of foregoing her personal safety in the name of freedom. She was a profuse writer, curious and restless, sometimes perhaps blunt and annoying, but always vital, indefatigable, always establishing communication between the centre and the periphery, always bringing otherness home.

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