



## STOCKCERO TEACHING KIT (182)

TEXT: *La ciudad de los jóvenes: reportaje fantasía* (1971)

AUTHOR: Aurora Bertrana

EDITOR: Silvia Roig

### PART 1: CONTEXT & CRITICAL ANALYSIS

#### **Aurora Bertrana: A Pioneer Against the Grain**

Aurora Bertrana (1892-1974) was an atypical and unconventional Catalan writer, known for her adventurous life and independent thought. Despite early attempts by her literary father, Prudenci Bertrana, to steer her away from writing, she became a prolific author, exploring various genres from travel chronicles to utopian novels. Her work consistently challenged prevailing moralities and engaged deeply with feminist ideologies, even if she hesitated to label herself a "feminist."

#### ***La ciudad de los jóvenes: A Utopian Critique***

In *La ciudad de los jóvenes: reportaje fantasía* (1971), Bertrana presents a futuristic utopian vision. A journalist from "La Ciudad de los Viejos" (Francoist Spain) visits "The City of the Young," a society free from political parties, traditional authority, and crime. This utopian city boasts absolute equality between women and men, sexual freedom, and deep environmental respect. However, the most striking discoveries for the journalist are the young inhabitants' pursuit of a "single sex" (hermaphroditism) and the invention of an artificial uterus, aimed at eradicating gender differences and liberating women from traditional reproductive roles.

#### **Feminist Vision and Social Experimentation**

Bertrana's novel is a bold exploration of gender identity, sexuality, and family structures, echoing the theories of contemporary feminists like Simone de Beauvoir, Shulamith Firestone, and Judith Butler. She proposes a society where human beings are mutable and adaptable, advocating for a redefinition of language, property, maternity, and family. The novel portrays a community built on cooperation, affection, and spiritual connection, where traditional possessives ("mi", "tu", "su") are eliminated in favor of communal ownership.

#### **The Shadow of Censorship**

This edition crucially highlights the impact of Francoist censorship on *La ciudad de los jóvenes*. The introduction details how Bertrana's manuscript was subjected to review by the state's censorship body, revealing excised fragments that criticized the regime, advocated for free love, and explored "immoral" ideas. Despite the censors' attempts to suppress its radical content, Bertrana and her editor bravely chose to publish the work, implicitly challenging the repressive cultural environment of the time.

#### **A "Fantasy Report" on Modernity's Paradoxes**

Bertrana's utopian project, presented as a "fantasy report," is not without its internal critiques. The narrator-protagonist finds aspects of "The City of the Young"—such as the lack of interest in art and literature, and the mechanization of sexual encounters in the "Hogar del Amor Pasajero"—to be problematic. This duality underscores Bertrana's nuanced understanding that societal progress, even in its most radical forms, can



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present new challenges, particularly the risks of technological isolation and the commodification of human experience.

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## **PART 2: TOPICS FOR CLASS DISCUSSION**

### ***Utopian Literature as Social Critique:***

Discuss how *La ciudad de los jóvenes* uses the utopian genre to critique contemporary (Francoist) Spanish society. What specific aspects of "La Ciudad de los Viejos" (The City of the Old) does Bertrana satirize or condemn?

### ***Gender Identity and Sexual Freedom:***

Examine Bertrana's exploration of gender identity and sexual freedom in "The City of the Young." How do concepts like the "single sex" or artificial gestation challenge traditional definitions of masculinity, femininity, and family? How does this relate to theories by Judith Butler or Shulamith Firestone?

### ***Censorship and Authorial Resistance:***

Analyze the impact of censorship on *La ciudad de los jóvenes*. How did Bertrana navigate these restrictions, and what does the "administrative silence" of the censors reveal about the political climate of the time? Discuss the significance of the included censored fragments.

### ***The Paradox of Progress:***

While "The City of the Young" offers many progressive ideals, the narrator finds certain aspects problematic (e.g., lack of art, mechanized sex). What criticisms does Bertrana implicitly make about this "advanced" society, and what does it suggest about her nuanced view of progress?

### ***Language and Social Change:***

The novel mentions the elimination of possessive pronouns like "my" or "your" in "The City of the Young." Discuss the significance of this linguistic change in reflecting a new social and economic order.

### ***Bertrana's Feminism:***

Although Aurora Bertrana did not always define herself as a "feminist," how does her life and work, particularly *La ciudad de los jóvenes*, embody feminist principles? Compare her approach to women's rights and education with other contemporary feminist movements in Spain or Catalonia.

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## **PART 3: SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

- **Bertrana, Aurora.** *La ciudad de los jóvenes: reportaje fantasía.* SpanishBookPress Edition.
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## PART 4: QUIZ BANK (Multiple Choice)

**What unique societal feature in “The City of the Young” most surprises the journalist from “La Ciudad de los Viejos”?**

- A) The absence of crime
- B) The pursuit of a “single sex” (hermaphroditism)
- C) The advanced public transportation
- D) The vegetarian diet

**Correct Answer: B**

**According to the introduction, what was the primary reason Aurora Bertrana initially focused on music instead of literature?**

- A) Lack of talent in writing
- B) Her father’s desire to shield her from the hardships of a literary career
- C) Financial difficulties
- D) The strict cultural norms against women artists

**Correct Answer: B**

**The novel is a powerful critique of which political regime, still in power at the time of its publication?**

- A) The Spanish Second Republic
- B) The Francoist dictatorship
- C) The Catalan government
- D) The monarchy of Alfonso XIII

**Correct Answer: B**

**Which technological advancement in “The City of the Young” aims to liberate women from traditional reproductive roles?**

- A) Flying cars
- B) Artificial intelligence
- C) The artificial uterus
- D) Teleportation

**Correct Answer: C**

**The inclusion of censored fragments in this edition highlights the impact of state control over which aspect of Bertrana’s work?**

- A) Her economic theories
- B) Her descriptions of sexual freedom and criticism of the regime
- C) Her travel narratives
- D) Her historical analyses

**Correct Answer: B**

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