# Domesticating modernity: markets, home, and morality in the middle class in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, 1930s and 1940s

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Abstract:
The middle-class home acted as an economic, political and moral force for Brazil in the 1930s and 1940s. Consumer products bought by the middle class for themselves and their homes were a tangible sign of economic progress. The domestic home was a refuge from the harsh realities of market competition and political confrontation. The peacefulness of middle-class women served as a morally stabilizing force.

Full Text:
In a modest, but comfortable, home in Sao Paulo late one afternoon, the voices of two brothers are dying down from a long and disruptive debate about politics. Carlos, diligent bookkeeper at a downtown commercial firm and elder of the two, simply cannot understand his brother's attraction to radical politics. Alfredo, rebel with numerous causes and on the run from police, has insisted all along that he, unlike his brother, lives for an ideal. With nothing more to say to each other, they allow their long-suffering mother the last word. Pausing for a moment in her endless chores, Dona Lola asks Alfredo, plaintively, "Don't you think you can find happiness in a peaceful home life?"

This scene never actually happened. Carlos, Alfredo, and Dona Lola are characters in Leandro Dupre's 1943 best-selling novel titled There Were Six of Us, described by one reviewer as the "perfect middle-class novel . . . because of the author's faithfulness to middle-class types, to the thinking of the social group to which she belongs."(1) What is significant here is the symbolic coupling of home, politics, and middle class. For, in most cases, the many who read this book probably were not very different from the people depicted in the scene itself--white-collar employees and professionals and their families in Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

By the early 1940s, these people (and others) understood that modern Brazil was strikingly different from Brazil before 1930. Through the decades after 1900, the supple bonds of agrarian patriarchalism had loosened in the face of economic expansion, urbanization, and industrialization. In politics, dissident elites and their urban allies had launched a series of revolts in the 1920s that culminated in the nearly bloodless revolution of 1930 against the elites who had monopolized political structures since the 1890s. It was a revolution of disappointed expectations for many white-collar Cariocas and Paulistanos who watched its promise of a more participatory and peaceful politics tarnish in a corrosive atmosphere of right- and left-wing extremism and revanchism by elites aspiring to restore the old regime.

The new Brazil also differed from the old in that class had become a defining feature of Brazilian politics in preceding decades. Between 1917 and 1921, anarchists led a series of unprecedented general strikes. The Communist party was founded in 1922. In the 1930s, militant labor unions demanded voice and by the early 1940s, President Getulio Vargas seemed ready to court their favor, easing restrictions on labor activity in the Estado Novo (New State), the authoritarian regime that took power in 1937.

In this context, Dupre allowed Dona Lola to represent the peace and quiet of the home that seemed in such sharp contrast to the clangor of society beyond the walls. Much more than just a yearning for domestic tranquillity, she, and her son Carlos, stood for a kind of counterideal to Alfredo's radicalism, and by extension, to politics more generally. Through her selfless actions, soft words, and spirit of resignation, she embodied the proposition that home life could be a refuge from the confusion of a rua, the public and vaguely dangerous space of the street, broadly understood, where markets, interests, and politics were the order of the day.(2) In a sense, the middle-class home as depicted in Dupre's novel was the flip side of the perceived disorder of the outside world, and as such, it serves as a powerful metaphor for understanding the ways in which the middle-class in Brazil's larger cities related to the dramatic changes of their rapidly modernizing society. This fugue between inside and outside, order and disorder, I contend, resonated deeply in middle-class lives. In the face of dramatic change and as social danger was being recast in class terms, the middle class came to be its own symbol of social peace. This symbolism defined the central paradox of the middle-class condition during these years--living by an idealized, almost mythological role that could never be achieved.(3)

I begin this article with a detailed consideration of the experiential and mental universe of labor and consumption markets for middle-class Brazilians. I am principally conceded with the ways a modern market mentality converged with traditional notions of social hierarchy to give certain people in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo new means of distinguishing themselves from those below them, even as it created enormous insecurities and uncertainties that helped define the experience and meaning of being middle class. I will then examine the emergence of a vision of domesticity keyed to the advantages and dilemmas of middle-class life in a modernizing, market society in which class was becoming a central axis of social experience and identity. I will conclude by connecting this vision of domesticity to the wider sphere of politics in a class society.

It is by now a cliche that the middle class is difficult to define. The problem lies in the insistence on an a priori definition, whereas any historically concrete middle class (and probably any social grouping) must be found in the details of a given historical period. In the context of the expansion of and crisis in the coffee export economy, incipient industrialization, and growth of the public sector, the sons and daughters of declining fazendeiros(4) and of immigrants and native Brazilians who had worked their way up out of an indistinct mass of manual laborers and literate poor converged in an emergent middle class between roughly 1850 and 1930.(5) For the two decades after 1930, my research indicates that the cities of Rio and Sao Paulo were the center of gravity of middle-class experience. That experience may be characterized in terms of the lifeways of families headed by white-collar (colarinho e gravata), salaried employees, and professionals who did not engage in manual labor, and who were overwhelmingly white or light skinned.(6) These were people who had some education beyond primary school and who possessed a level of culture--manners, speech, and behavior--that set them apart from workers. They generally enjoyed a higher standard of living than the families of most manual workers, but by no means were wealthy.

This static sketch is less than half the story. More important than the laundry list of occupations it implies--commercial and bank clerks, teachers, doctors, lawyers, engineers, government employees, journalists, accountants, bookkeepers, office professionals, salesmen, managers and supervisors--is that middle-class Brazilians were people who lived economic and social lives oriented to dynamic aspects of a competitive society under the constraints of their economic condition. As such, their social lives were defined by the anxiety and aspiration of labor market competition, by a preoccupation with social mobility (upward as well as downward), and by their access to a vibrant new consumer market for manufactured goods beyond the experience of most poorly paid workers. Middle-class lifeways, then, partook of and contributed to the emergence of a "competitive social order" after the mid-nineteenth century. At the same time, they remained deeply tied to the cultural legacies of patrimonialism, patronage, and hierarchy, in the context of capitalist development rooted in Brazil's role in the global economy.(7)

Finally, a middle class (or for that matter, any class) is much more than a statistical matter.(8) It is as much state of mind as objective condition, as much a matter of becoming as a specific social station. Yearnings and fantasies are as important as the material conditions of everyday life. As such, I conceive of the Brazilian middle class in this period as a field of opportunity and potentiality for patterned behavior and self-identification rooted in the discourses and experiences of markets, homes, and politics.(9)

## SECRETS OF THE MARKET

A young man placed an advertisement in Sao Paulo's major daily newspaper on Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday, May 20, 22, and 24, 1936, proffering his services as an office assistant.(10) His two main selling points were that he had a diploma from the highly regarded Alvares Penteado Commercial School, and that he had considerable experience in the Triangle, Sao Paulo's booming commercial district. He could be reached at a post office box, but gave no name (probably because he was already working at a firm and did not want it known that he was job hunting). While in later years employment ads were much more likely to originate with employers than job seekers,(11) this young man's attempt to offer himself in an open fashion bespoke the growing sense of competition that was coming to dominate white-collar labor markets in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo.

This job seeker was only one among tens of thousands. Bank and commercial clerks, teachers, public functionaries, lawyers, doctors all must have thrilled at and complained of the "extraordinary intensification of the struggle for life" during the 1930s and 1940s.(12) The idea of competition as a defining feature of social life percolated through urban culture more generally as advertisers aimed sales pitches at young, white-collar men, hawking everything from night schools ("Prepare yourselves for the struggle!"), to brain tonics ("In the turbulence of modern life victory goes to those with strong brains!"), to razors ("Winners shave daily with Gillette!"), to life insurance ("With each passing day the struggle for life is getting harder. Today, competition is a harsh reality").(13)

The perceived harshness of competition had ambiguous effects within the social order. Education came to be more prized than ever before, since it was so often the ticket for admission into a respectable white-collar job, as the young Alvares Penteado man had recognized. Yet, even as modern aspects of market culture were taking root, older growth did not whither. Personal connections, institutionalized in the pedido (letter of request) and pistolao (letter of recommendation) continued to inform the expectations, anxieties, and strategies of those who navigated the turbulent straits of a tight labor market.(14) Thus, candidates taking the examination for a government position also might seek out a patron to help them in a white-collar work world in which meritocracy and patronage were alternative strategies for getting a leg up.

A dense mass of men concentrated in Rio's and Sao Paulo's white-collar labor markets now competed for respectable, nonmanual work as a matter of course. A generalized sense of competition for these jobs existed in Brazil's larger cities throughout the nineteenth century. In an export-oriented slave economy, only a few could do more than imagine the possibilities of finding a job that would give them security. But, with the late nineteenth-century expansion of the coffee export economy, the urbanization and industrialization of the early twentieth century, and the bureaucratization of government, opportunities in the white-collar sector grew. Consequently, ever greater numbers of men and women began to dream of securing a place for themselves in Brazil's finely calibrated social hierarchy.

In the face of growing competitiveness, the long-standing Brazilian preoccupation with status and social position became pervasive. White-collar publications constantly referred to the twin pillars of Brazilian social distinction--the differences between manual and nonmanual work, and between the culto and the inculto (loosely, the cultured and the uncultured). For example, bank clerks, public

functionaries, lawyers, teachers, journalists, accountants, and doctors insisted that they were intellectual workers. Even the lowliest commercial clerks set themselves off from the "brutish, unthinking, silent mass," since they were a "civilized" part of Brazil's middle class.(15) Indeed, the easy glissade from a simple manual-nonmanual dichotomy into notions of cultural elevation and competence was a crucial aspect of the way in which middle-class men defined themselves in the social hierarchy. Thus, civil engineers set themselves off from skilled manual workers, who in many cases, performed the same work, by their "general culture," which workers "unhappily lacked."(16) This boundary was carefully patrolled, and white-collar organizations sought to reinforce it during the 1930s and 1940s by building libraries and classroom complexes to "cultivate their intelligence," so that members might become "homers cultos" (cultivated men) by attending to the "cultural level of [their] spirit[s]."(17)

The ballooning notion that it was now possible to get ahead in life must be understood in this context. When publications of white-collar organizations urged members to embrace the idea of "always try[ing] to move up a little more," something far more basic was at stake than simply money.(18) For the dream of moving up implied the nightmare of dropping down in the social scale, a fact that prompted one author to dedicate his book on the problems of the middle class to those who lived between the "hope of rising" and the "fear of falling," with heavier emphasis on the latter than the former. (19) The interplay between hope and fear was captured in an advertising campaign of the 1930s and 1940s, in which an insurance company trucked in the anxieties of insecure people. The basic motif changed from time to time, but the message of these small melodramas was always the same: The father who failed to buy life insurance for his son was to blame for the fact that now the child shined shoes (or carried bags, or worked in a factory--labor identified with illiterate and darker skinned people) rather than went to school, since the "educated and the capable always win!"(20)

Winning did not mean merely the holding of a particular job. Consumption was another axis along which people in an emerging middle class experienced expanding markets. Before 1920 in Brazil, virtually nothing existed that might pass for a consumer market. Donas de casa (housewives) bought most household goods from peddlers, local merchants, or vendors, so that routine, personal relationships were as important to the experience of consumption as the arm's-length anonymity of mass markets. The well-to-do in Brazil's largest cities were the thin edge of a transformation in the 1920s.(21) By the 1930s, middle-class households also were being targeted by advertisers for everything from beauty products to electric appliances, and were shopping in the Mappin department store, through whose doors only the well heeled had passed before 1930.

Of course, the idea that material possessions connoted status was hardly new. After 1920, however, urbanization, rising incomes and sheer numbers led to a dramatic intensification of the pursuit of status through consumption. Emblematic of just how central consumption had become in middle-class lives during the 1930s and 1940s, a 1945 domestic advice book called My House admonished women that "knowing how to buy is an art, it is indispensable knowledge for every good dona de casa."(22)

What were middle-class housewives buying with the money their husbands (and sometimes they themselves) earned, and what did it mean? For the growing mass of people who harbored the desire to rise above the common rabble of inculto manual workers, clothes and cultural projection took on heightened importance. Advertisements, especially those aimed at middle-class men and women, focused on status concerns. Conflating needs and desires, fashion columns, and ads for clothes and sewing machines insisted that women could be "modern and elegant" without extravagant expense.(23) They seem to have enjoyed some success. Market surveys conducted in the mid 1940s indicate that middle-class women spent significantly more on clothes and beauty products as a proportion of income than did poor or working-class women. The same study suggested an equally powerful yen within the middle class to be culto. Middle-class families outspent both rich and poor as a proportion of household income in acquiring cultural goods--schooling, books, magazines, encyclopedias--despite severe budgetary limitations.(24)

However, it was the dramatically expanded availability of consumer durables--radios, record players, refrigerators, carpets, sewing machines, typewriters, telephones, even cars--that marked the dawn of a consumer culture in urban Brazil. Consumption of these goods seemed to carry a social significance far beyond their utilitarian value, combining the impulse to modernity with a new way to project status. Advertisements hint at what was going on. As early as 1932, for instance, General Electric announced that its marvelous appliances were for "modern homes, the homes of families where the idea of comfort is linked to thrift."(25)

Through the 1930s, the most sought after of such marvels was the radio. One magazine proclaimed in 1935 that all "modern homes" had to have one.(26) A 1937 Philco ad linked radios to an elevated social status, picturing a gathering of distinguished looking people in long dresses and tuxedos, sipping champagne, sitting around a wood cabinet with large speakers.(27) Public functionary Jose Moacir de Andrade Sobrinho agreed in 1940 that a radio (and then a refrigerator) was the "next big expense" after rent, clothes, and a maid.(28) And, by 1944, one commentator argued that a "dignified" lifestyle implied the ownership of a radio, and other "indispensable products that progress is furnishing."(29)

Of course, status claims based on the ownership of particular products were inherently unstable. For example, by the mid-1940s, ownership of a basic radio set was no longer sufficient to mark status, since many workers could own one.(30) Even at this early stage, the logic of consumerism, the constant pressure to own the latest model, the fanciest style, the newest gadget to keep up with peers and ahead of those behind, was already apparent. As one man put it in 1947, "There is always more things to buy and consume, there is always a desire to better one's standard of living."(31)

It is possible to glimpse just how deeply a consumer mentality had penetrated the middle class by the 1940s. One market study revealed that 75 percent of middle-class women said they paused at the window displays of Casa Canada, an upscale apparel store in Rio and Sao Paulo, to window shop. There is nothing remarkable in this, except that only 25 percent of wealthy women and a bare 2 percent of poor women claimed to do so.(32) A comparison of the different experiences implied here is illuminating. Because rich women simply could stride into the store, knowing that they could afford to buy, window shopping as daydream was not part of their experience. Most poor women, on the other hand, probably did not even bother to waste time on something so clearly outside the realm of their economic possibility. But, something in the image of a middle-class housewife breaking stride at a display window, longing for something not altogether unimaginable, but, nevertheless beyond financial reach, bespeaks the constitutive dilemma of middle-class consumption.(33)

Retailers were alive to this dilemma, and openly exhorted people to spend beyond their means. Consumer credit companies began to spring up, and by 1940, one was telling its potential customers, "If you have money . . . buy! If what you have at the moment is not enough, buy anyway."(34) Many took advantage of such offers, as is clear from frequent allusions to middle-class indebtedness throughout the 1930s and 1940s. How else, after all, was a bookkeeper to afford a radio that cost two or three times his monthly salary?

Traditional concerns for status intensified the strain between limited budgets and new consumption opportunities, especially among the middle class, who, as one observer noted in the mid-1950s, "put the emphasis on hierarchy."(35) Thus, the ability to consume up to one's social level was far more than merely keeping up with the Joneses. Above all, it was a question of securing a place in a hierarchical order that defined social identity and conditioned access to education, connections, and jobs. This is what accounts for the plaints of white-collar employees and professionals insisting that they were entitled to a lifestyle commensurate with their "higher place in the social scale."(36)

Indeed, a great wailing and gnashing of teeth often could be heard over the fact that "hundreds and thousands of manual workers" were earning more than certain white-collar employees and professionals.(37) What matters here is less the accuracy of such statements than the indignant air of scandal at the image of well-scrubbed, reasonably educated lawyers, doctors, teachers, or bank employees making less than some janitors, doormen, stone masons, soccer players, or factory workers.(38) This was the fear that lurked in the souls of people who were coming to believe that they had something to lose, and who hoped and expected that all who heard their jeremiads would sympathize with the victims of an unjust remunerative scheme that flew in the face of the accepted ordering of occupations.

Financial insecurity, then, far from attenuating the distinction between the middle class and working class, seemed to reinforce it. The tensions and ambiguities of this situation were a defining feature of middle-class life during this period, as market researchers recognized when they concluded in 1946 that the middle class, which "yearn[ed] for a better representation and struggled desperately to keep up appearances," was worse off than workers, who "did not have greater social obligations."(39)

## SMALL WORLD OF THE HOME

The tight knot among market forces, straitened budgets, new opportunities, and traditional concerns for hierarchy and status was a dominant reality of middle-class homes during the 1930s and 1940s. These homes generally comprised a husband, a wife, children, and usually a single servant. Within them, middle-class donas de casa might work at the tangle, loosening here, cinching there, without ever being able to undo it altogether. During the thirties and forties, this thankless task came to represent the central dilemma of middle-class life--how to secure domestic order and respectability in the face of limited resources.

At mid-century, women could no longer be seen as living a secular cloister. If through the nineteenth and into the twentieth century women of the respectable classes had been identified almost exclusively with a domestic space largely sealed off from the outside world,(40) by 1940, their situation had changed considerably. Since the 1920s, it had become more common for women from middle-class families to take office jobs. Going to work meant being out in a rua, with all its allures and opportunities. Moreover, during the 1930s and into the 1940s, movies, car rides, fashion, modem romance novels, magazines, advertisements, radios, shopping, Samba, and dancing were all available to young women in a way they had not been before, perhaps making traditional roles seem confining and narrow.

Yet, the break with the past was not so sharp.(41) Most women who worked outside the home did so only until they married, or for limited stints to help their families through a tough financial period. While considerable numbers of women became teachers and social workers, most employed women worked at routine jobs, such as typing, that paid poorly. In addition, women who worked outside the home were not exempt from the burdens of maintaining a household. Thus, within the constraints set by Brazilian society at the time, for every young woman who dreamed of becoming a teacher, there were probably several more who preferred the role of wife, mother, and homemaker.

Nor did staying at home isolate donas de casa from the currents of the times. Consumer culture did not remain respectfully at the doorway. Advertisers avidly competed for women's attention through images projected in magazine, newspaper, and radio ads: women in cars, women as beaming housewives, women as the bosses of their servants, women confidently negotiating a rua, women as slinky, independent, and self-assured. Women were targeted as "buyer[s] par excellence,"(42) and market surveyors seemed to take women's attitudes toward consumption more seriously than those of men.

Not incidentally, consumption offered middle-class housewives a further means of separating themselves from working-class women and a vicarious means of sidling up to the rich. Ads for beauty products during the 1930s and 1940s told women to make themselves healthy, beautiful, and seductive through potions, makeup, and clothes in "this century of dynamism and progress."(43) Working-class women were much less likely to read the magazines in which these ads appeared. As a result, market researchers generally excluded poor or working class women from market studies on perfume, deodorants, and other beauty and personal hygiene products. Consumption, then, was a way middle-class donas de casa, like their collar-and-tie husbands, could secure and project status compared to those beneath them in the social hierarchy.

But the dona de casa's role went beyond shopping. For while a wife could work outside the home if necessary, her ability to stay at home was itself a badge of status for her husband and herself. Moreover, donas de casa were deeply implicated in the task of securing a family's social position. Housekeeping manuals, magazines aimed at women, and novels set in middle-class homes all stressed thrift, suggesting the many ways an imaginative housewife could stretch the family budget to ensure a "solidly settled economic base."(44) According to these sources, a housewife should mend old clothes, learn to make new ones, shop comparatively, make creative use of leftovers, manage the maid, and insist on "extraordinary cleanliness." One author explicitly equated men's and women's work: "[There] is no less value in the woman's role [than the man's]. . . . Managing the house, raising the spirit of the children, monitoring expenses, economizing, seeing to the moral and material well-being of the children and husband, all

these make feminine activities at least as important as masculine ones."(45)

The question is, important for what? Housekeeping manuals and other sources bespeak a subtle change in women's roles in the home.(46) While the home was a site of status seeking in a market society, it was also supposed to be a refuge from the harshness of a competitive world outside the domestic sphere. Donas de casa stood at the boundary between the two. On this view, wives could respond to the importunities of labor and consumer markets by economizing and by creating a tranquil atmosphere to which their husbands could come home. Such an understanding of domesticity gives pause, for the implicit rationale was economic rather than patriarchal. Owing her husband tenderness and patience as well as obedience, a wife's obligation in a more conjugal family was being conceptualized in terms of the family's broader relationship to a market economy, not only in terms of an inherent duty to a husband.(47) Traditional roles had hardly collapsed--husbands continued to lean on patriarchy to assert their authority at home. Still, these manuals and magazines suggest that the relationship between men and women was changing in complex ways, accommodating rather than negating market forces, even as traditional gender relations were influencing the character of the market.

There is an obvious tension between home as place of repose and calm, and as a place where the never-ending struggle to secure and maintain a position in the social hierarchy was played out. Thrift as the organizing principle of middle-class homes was therefore ambiguous, both as concept and in practice. It was one way donas de casa could help their families consume up to their social level. At the same time, it was pregnant with an implication of social inferiority. For the middle class, the very need to economize made their households seem more like homes of the poor than like those of the financially secure.

Housekeeping manuals and magazines responded by trying to make thrift a virtue. One writer on matters domestic, for instance, vehemently denied that thrift is proof of inferiority. Certainly, women who spent "hours and hours" beautifying themselves to the neglect of their children were not to be admired, although even "frugal women" could not afford to ignore their appearance, since their social position demanded more of them than of "working-class women or women of the people."(48) Yet, good donas de casa should not make the mistake the rich so often did, emphasizing luxury over "equilibrium in finances." This was particularly so in regard to children, as the inexcusable ostentation of the monied often "rent the harmony" of their homes and produced "disordered" children.(49) Wealth, in other words, was no guarantee of and hardly necessary to happiness--it might even be inimical to it--for "modest lives" could be happy by adopting a "middle way" of thrift and simplicity.(50)

A distinctive sensibility regarding the nature and purpose of the home in personal life and wider society seems to have underlain this vision of domesticity. Ideally, order, discipline, harmony, equilibrium, comfort, tranquillity, stability, and a sound morality were goals to be striven for in the domestic sphere. Their opposites--disorder, disharmony, disequilibrium, disorganization, and immorality--were to be avoided at all costs. Religion was indispensable, as much a source of practical morality as a matter of belief, articulating a social position for those who were neither rich nor poor. The idea was that people of moderate means could create home lives morally and spiritually, if not materially, superior to those of the rich. In doing so, they could secure themselves against those below who lacked the resources to create ordered, moral, and tranquil home lives.

At the same time, the idealized middle-class home of housekeeping manuals, magazines, and novels implied a limited sense of being in control of one's own destiny, in sharp contrast to the indomitable chaos of the turbulent world outside. As one author put it in 1945, the home was a safe harbor where the family could "choose its relationships, determine its own program for life, and ensure the proper upbringing of children by avoiding futile and pernicious contacts with society."(51) In short, for those with the means and inclination to discipline themselves to economy and the middle way, home could be a place where a feeling of independence and autonomy, however tenuous, could be lovingly cultivated.

Dissonance between the home as site of status seeking and home as refuge from the outside world obliquely indicates the challenges middle-class donas de casa faced in a market society. We cannot know how many or exactly how housewives read the manuals and magazines that purveyed these views. Ample evidence testifies that middle-class men and women persisted in trying to imitate the rich, often eschewed frugality, and commonly refused to content themselves with their modest positions--precisely the sorts of bad habits they were supposed to avoid. The point of examining these sources, therefore, cannot be to reveal an authentic description of middle-class home life.

Nevertheless, these manuals and magazines exposed the broad dilemmas of middle-class economic and social lives. Homes could be tempestuous places amidst the swirl of desires and fears rooted in the middle-class relationship to market forces. Manuals and magazines, and novels more indirectly, indicate that one way middle-class people could confront this fact was to try to organize their home lives according to an ideal that prized thrift, order, and morality. The middle class honored values cheap enough to be affordable, but difficult enough to maintain that the vast bulk of the working-class poor could not measure up.

## POLITICAL ORDER THROUGH MORALITY

Were there resonances between the inner tensions and contradictions of idealized middle-class home life and the broader politics of class by the mid-twentieth century? An answer does not lie in the direction of identifying middle-class political leanings for one party or another, or spelling out a supposedly distinctive middle-class political program. Indeed, contemporaries believed that there was no distinctly middle-class political position at the level of national politics. It was commonly lamented in the 1940s that the middle class had been "left out" of the postwar political equation, their interests subordinated to those of "proletariat and bourgeoisie."(52) A spokesman for middle-class interests concluded in the mid-1950s that whereas "the working class is united and strengthens itself through its sindicatos" and "employers, with the resources they have, find ways of defending their interests, . . . our middle class is completely abandoned to its own fate, forgotten by politicians, at the margin of public life, relegated, alas, to a secondary plane."(53) And though the responses surely had many different meanings, it is worth noting that 83 percent of middle class Sao Paulo residents polled in 1948 said they were not interested in politics.(54)

From this apparent lack of political enthusiasm' we need not conclude that the middle class was politically irrelevant. Even though middle class individuals were deeply ambivalent about associational life,(55) and without a party of their own or a highly visible

spokesman for their interests, they set their signatures to the social and political order in manifold ways. They were clients to powerful politicians, patrons to poorer people, social workers, educators, bureaucrats, labor lawyers, journalists, and others who ministered to the working class through their work. Still, it is worth taking seriously the notion that large numbers of middle-class people felt themselves to be excluded from national political institutions by 1950, or at least betrayed no particular inclination to active political participation. Paschoal Lemme, a Left-leaning school teacher, is emblematic. In explaining his lack of political involvement during the 1930s, perhaps the period of most intense middle-class political engagement at that time, he had this to say:

I was not affiliated with any political organization, nor was I

involved in any kind of party militancy. My work and tasks at the

Secretariat of Education and Culture of the Federal District and at the

Educational Inspector's office of the State of Rio de Janeiro, plus my

family responsibilities, left me no time to devote to other activities.

But it was not just a matter of time, as I never had any intention of

associating with a political party.(56)

One easily imagines any number of donas de casa expressing a similar lack of interest in political activity, especially given the historical exclusion of Brazilian women from activity in the public sphere.(57)

While most were not as self-conscious as Lemme, people sharing this outlook likely saw collective action for broader class and political ends as a kind of side show to the real challenges of life in a rapidly modernizing social order. For them, individualized striving in the labor market and in the home was a better option than politics for attaining the good life--or at least the best life they could hope for. Commentators professing a concern for the middle class worried about the consequences of what was perceived as a widespread sentiment. Joao Lyra Filho, the author of Problems of the Middle Classes, argued in 1942 that the "competitive spirit" was breeding an intractable "individualist sentiment" that undermined collective action. And a lawyer's clarion call for defense of the middle class in the 1950s concluded that the "middle class, by its character, has a marked individualist tendency. It is more concerned with its own affairs, individually, than with defending itself through professional organizations or group associations."(58)

An approach to understanding politics in this situation is to focus on political sensibilities--the nexus of valuations, preferences, and ideals underlying political attitudes. These were the raw materials from which politicians and ideologues fashioned the messages delivered by political parties and the state. Such deeper political currents are relevant to understanding both the broad bands of people who remained outside institutional frameworks as well as those who ventured into the political arena.(59)

One of the housekeeping manuals already analyzed provides an immediate sense of the connection I wish to make between domesticity and politics. Serrano, in Notions of Home Economics (1954). repeated much of what she had said in her 1945 My House and echoed the tone of magazines such as O Cruzeiro and Vida Domestica. She argued that the housewife's social mission was to "try to improve human society" by "combating egoism" and "correcting the asperity of the masculine character."(60) The message was clear: Donas de casa could have an important role in ensuring order, equilibrium, and morality in society at large through their activity in the home.

Lyra, in Problems of the Middle Classes also linked the values of middle-class home life to broader social and political concerns. If only the middle class could develop a "habit of thrift," he declared, and live by "moral discipline," they would feel no need to "dispute what others have" and would contribute thereby to the "tranquility of a life of peace and comfort, that would permit harmony among men." Essentially, this was a matter of organizing the home properly, for "the family is the most stable force for consolidating the social order" end for ensuring a "serene world [of] collective calm."(61)

One of the richest sources for teasing out the meaning of Serrano's and Lyra's word, is novels specifically about the middle class written during the 1930s and 1940s.(62) These books, some with titles such as Petit Bourgeois and Middle Class, contain an implicit conceptualization of the relationship between domesticity and politics. They allow a glimpse of the gossamer threads linking personal life to political sensibilities. This coupling of home and politics, just one among many competing visions of the good society, descries a political dimension intersecting the ideologies and concrete programs usually associated with the politics of class. It also illuminates ways those outside institutional politics could make sense of politics in the intimacy of personal and private lives.(63)

Written in a self-conscious style of social realism, these stories revolve around the clash between the domestic ideal and the harsh world of economic competition and political turbulence outside the home. A number of them recount the slow fall of young middle-class men who allow themselves to be seduced by the allures of radical left-wing politics. Some characters find themselves shattered and alone at the end of the book, having abandoned middle-class identities for the illusion of a pointless and ultimately unrealizable solidarity with workers. Others wake up in time to the error of their ways.(64)

Nor do these books excoriate only radical politics. Mainstream partisan politics is seen as a dark force antithetical to higher moral purpose and the greater good of society. At root, the problem lies in the egoism of economically powerful elites and the politiqueiros (corrupt politicians) who treat politics as an arena for little more than personal advancement, without regard for social peace or the good of the nation.(65)

The only hint of an answer to the quandary of politics in these books is to depict the middle class as the moral center of gravity that can hold society together in the face of the centripetal force of the age--the struggle between capital and labor.(66) From the

perspective adopted in these stories, the immorality of the powerful leads them to ignore the legitimate demands of the working class, which responds with the minatory roar of the oppressed. The resulting class struggle upsets social equilibrium and harmony. It is for this reason, says a character in one of the books, that society must "attend to the formation of the middle class,"(67) as there is no other way to avoid open class warfare. Crucially, the lexicon of social peace employed in these novels is identical to the language used by housekeeping manuals to describe a proper home--order, equilibrium, harmony, morality. In short, only a moral politics mediated by a politically neutral middle class can keep the antagonists from each others' throats.

In these stories, the home has a distinct political status. Women play a leading role in securing social peace--not in spite of, but because of, their alienation from the hurry-burly of politics.(68) Mothers, wives, and girlfriends in tightly rendered domestic persona represent intimate counterpoints both to working-class radicalism and to the corruptions of elite politics. Young, middle-class men who should know better invariably break with girlfriends or trouble their mothers' sleep in the process of becoming left-wing radicals.(69) Wives become paragons of virtue and moral rectitude in the same measure as husbands become moral monsters in politics, the board room, the drawing room, and the bedroom.(70) Symbolically, these women are conservators of order and morality, at home as well as in society at large.(71) Through them, men who properly value the life of home and family could participate in the mission of securing society's moral center. All others merely contributed to a dangerous social disharmony.

Political moralism shared the ambiguities of middle-class life more generally. The overall message of these books is that the middle class could serve as a force for stability and conciliation in a society riven by struggle and conflict among classes. Yet, the stories offered no means by which this morality could be brought directly to bear on political issues. Political action itself was morally suspect, so that the intrinsic force of morality alone was supposed to redeem the political sphere. The error of the other classes, the two combatants, was their failure to recognize the redemptive power of a morality operating above politics.

This view of politics is not so curious. A remarkable aspect of these books is the utter absence of a viable collective political experience for middle-class people. All politics amounted to unacceptable radicalism or entanglements with the corruptions of politicagem (political chicanery). Hedged in by powerful antagonists--employers and workers--battling for control of the material world and lacking a collective expression of their own, middle-class characters in these books see no realistic way of competing with capital and labor in the political sphere. Instead, they anchor their political outlook where they feel they have a modicum of control--the intimate life of family and home, where they can avoid "futile and pernicious contacts" with society.

Moreover, the very ideal of middle-class domesticity portrayed in the novels seems at odds with a meaningful sense of collective action. At the core of this vision was a concern for status, mediated through labor and consumption markets. Unlike collective politics, political moralism, intimately identified with the domestic sphere, did not interfere with or detract from the arduous task of orienting one's individual life toward securing a place in a competitive social order. As a consequence, while the novels counterpose morality to the dangers of politics, middle-class characters merely fulminate individually against politics. They are tortured by their desire for a state of affairs they can do very little to bring about--a good society divided hierarchically by class in which there are no class tensions.

Of course, the point of examining these novels cannot be to suggest that every middle-class Brazilian believed that morality was a sufficient answer to class conflict.(72) Nevertheless, political moralism, closely consonant with the language, Edenic vision, and glimpsed experience of the middle-class home, was a plausible outlook on politics for middle-class men and women. By recognizing class tensions as the source of social disequilibrium and offering morality as an alternative to class struggle, this vision located politics where the attention of the middle class appears to have been focused anyway--home life. Thus, the potential power of a politically fissile middle class was vested in its role as bearer of a conservatism rooted in the notion that the social world, although far from perfect, was preferable to unbridled class warfare.

## BETWEEN HOUSE AND STREET

What is striking about the mid-century, middle-class home as symbol is its capaciousness. In the Brazilian context, it could shelter the changes resulting from the expansion of a competitive social order as well as more resistant cultural forces.(73) The result was an unstable situation in which highly competitive, meritocratic labor markets, a budding consumer culture, and a concern with class divisions mingled with hierarchy, patronage, and a preoccupation with status in the middle-class experience.

The juxtaposition is suggestive, for it hints at the ways in which the new and old interacted to produce a medleyed modernity centered, from a middle-class perspective, on an imagined domestic fastness. Middle-class family men who worked for salaries were not merely atomistic individuals. As heads of families facing budgetary constraints, their ability to maintain a middle-class position could well depend on how their wives managed home life. Even as women's roles were being redefined in terms of their relationship to a market economy, the structural foundations of patriarchy were being reinforced. An important factor binding middle-class men and women together in the home, then, was the shared recognition, or perhaps the palpable hope, that while social hierarchy could properly be reinforced through market outcomes, it could not (or should not) be subverted by them. Hence the stress on morality as an ordering principle for the home--and for politics.

There was in the arcing of morality from domestic to political pole the familiar flicker of casa e rua (house and street). A heritage of the nineteenth century, the distinction was a spatial metaphor that, during the twentieth century, came to carry the charge of social difference(74)--and perhaps even of disappointing political experience. At home, donas de casa could try to keep the outside world, the street, at bay (although, in fact, the street entered the house in many ways, not least during the 1930s and 1940s, through consumerism, as I have indicated). Politics was one of the outside forces that impinged on domestic tranquillity, both at home and in society at large. Like the labor market, politics, as seen through the window of the home, seemed to be an arena of amoral individualism dominated by selfish men.(75) This perception fueled the belief that politics needed to be leavened by the morality of donas de casa, who were subject to a weakened but sturdy dependence on their husbands.

And so, middle-class men and women could deny themselves an active role in politics while imagining that morality in the private

sphere would, or at least should, have a calming influence in the public.(76) But, since morality was to be largely unmediated by collective involvement and since the home was in fact open to the forces of change on all sides, the influence also ran powerfully in the other direction.

NOTES

(1.) Sra. Leandro Dupre, Eramos seis (Sao Paulo, 1943), 240-1. The review was published in Diretrizes (June 5, 1943), 15. The novel went through eight editions in ten years, was made into a movie in Argentina, and was followed by a sequel in 1944.

(2.) The concept of a rua is discussed in Sandra Lauderdale Graham, House and Street: The Domestic World of Servants and Masters in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro (Austin, 1995); Roberto da Matta, A casa e a rua: Espaco, cidadania, mulher, e morte (Rio de Janeiro, 1987). See also Note 73.

(3.) It is important to keep in mind that the Brazilian middle class did not take shape in a discursive or conceptual void. By the time large numbers of white-collar employees and professionals begin to congregate in Rio and Sao Paulo, the idea of the middle class had already been around for nearly a century. Dror Wahrman has argued persuasively that the "ever rising `middle class'" came to be identified with the march of modernization in Britain during the nineteenth century, and spread from there. Dror Wahrman, Imagining the Middle Class: The Political Representation of Class in Britain, c. 1780-1840 (Cambridge, 1995).

Whether the idea of the middle class had a single point of origin in Britain or not, it was a concept already well known in Brazil by the twentieth century as connected with the ongoing modernization in Europe and the United States. This means that middle-class formation in Brazil was different from England. In Brazil, it was a matter of fitting experience to an already extant concept that had been diffused through the many channels of communication between Brazil, Europe, and the United States during the nineteenth century. Thus, the emergence of a Brazilian middle class, a product of social forces within Brazil, was also part and parcel of the process by which, in "reproducing its social order, Brazil unceasingly affirms and reaffirms European (and later American) ideas," and in doing so produces "off-center" versions of those ideas. Roberto Schwarz, Misplaced Ideas: Essays on Brazilian Culture (London, 1992), 29-30. However, one cannot argue that such ideas have ever faithfully reflected European or American social realities. Rather, these ideas, whether ideologies such as liberalism or descriptive and normative concepts such as the middle class, sheared away inconvenient aspects of historical change, leaving a narrative of European and American history refined of the ambiguities and tensions so obvious when the same ideas have been applied outside the cultural and historical context in which they emerged. But once part of the historical experience of places such as Brazil, their off-centeredness becomes part of the history of the idea itself.

(4.) Large landholders employing dependent labor.

(5.) For general context, see Mauricio Font, Coffee, Contention, and Change in the Making of Modern Brazil (Cambridge, MA, 1990); and Nicia Vilela Luz, A luta pela industrializacao do Brasil (Sao Paulo, 1978).

(6.) With the breakdown of slave-based patriarchy, skin color became the basis for advantage and disadvantage in the labor market. See Emilia Viotti da Costa, The Brazilian Empire: Myths and Histories (Chicago, 1985), 234-48. For Sao Paulo, see George Reid Andrews, Blacks and Whites in Sao Paulo, Brazil, 1888-1988 (Madison, 1991); Florestan Fernandes and Roger Bastide, Brancos e negros em Sao Paulo (Sao Paulo, 1959, 2d. ed.). For Rio de Janeiro, see L. A. da Costa Pinto, O negro no Rio de Janeiro (Sao Paulo, 1953), 84-5.

(7.) Florestan Fernandes, "Esboco de um estudo sobre a formacao e desenvolvimento da ordem social competitiva," in A Revolucao burguesa no Brasil (Rio de Janeiro, 1975); Francisco Weffort, "Estado e masses no Brasil," O populismo na politica brasileira (Rio de Janeiro, 1978). Fernandes's use of the term competitive social order accurately distinguishes the Brazilian situation, in which personal relationships and patronage remained strong within a developing market society from what has been called possessive individualism for Europe and the United States. See Emilia Viotti da Costa, "Liberalism: Theory and Practice," in Brazilian Empire: Myths and Histories (Chicago, 1985). The danger in drawing this distinction is that of taking possessive individualism for granted in Europe and the United States, without asking what role patronage and relational considerations may have had on the development of a competitive social order there during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

(8.) Any argument regarding the size of the middle class in Rio and Sao Paulo is hampered by the inaccuracy of census reports from this period as well as by the inherent difficulty of accounting for all of the available white-collar occupations. Perhaps the easiest thumbnail is to note that the service sector of the Brazilian economy, the major source of white-collar job opportunities, expanded from 15 percent of the work force in 1920 to 22 percent in 1950. The percentages for the cities of Rio and Sao Paulo were higher since service sector jobs were concentrated there. On the whole, the middle-class, including white-collar heads of family and dependents, probably accounted for about one fifth to one third of the population of Rio's roughly 3.5 million and Sao Paulo's roughly 3 million people in 1950. See the analysis in Brian Owensby, "`Stuck in the Middle': Middle Class and Class Society in Modern Brazil, 1850 to 1950" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1994), chaps. 2 and 3.

(9.) The sociological and theoretical literature seeking to define the middle class is enormous. There is no consensus on an abstract definition. Therefore, I conclude that any a priori definition is pointless and that a nuanced and complex conceptualization of the middle class requires an analysis rooted in the historical and cultural specificities of a given instance.

(10.) See O Estado de Sao Paulo, May 24, 1936.

(11.) In May, 1932, the average number of advertisements in the "Employees Sought" section of the classified section of O Estado de Sao Paulo was eleven. By 1936, the average had grown to thirty. In 1940, the average number of such advertisements was forty-four; in 1944 it was 140; in 1948, 151; and in 1950 the average had risen to about 250.

(12.) See, for example, Amilcar Cardoso, "No meu cantinho," Uniao 4 (January-February, 1931), 5; "Estagio e cultura," Syndike, 2 (June, 1935), 22-3; Sebastiao Barroso, "A medicina e a profissao medica na atualidade, "Revistado Sindicato Medico Brasileiro 11 (November, 1926), 163; "Ate quando," Revista do Syndicato Odontologico Brasileiro 1 (August, 1936). These citations are only a few examples of the official publications of white-collar associations and unions. See also the letter from Dilermando Xavier Porto to Osvaldo Aranha, May 5, 1938, Fundacao Getulio Vargas, Centro de Pesquisa e Documentacao (FGV-CPDOC), Pedidos folder for 1938.

(13.) O Cruzeiro, May 13, 1950; June 24, 1937; A Manha, June 30, 1935; Vida Carioca, 15 (February, 1934).

(14.) See generally pedidos in Osvaldo Aranha archive, FGV-CPDOC. Women sought patronage for themselves less frequently, although they often did so on behalf of husbands or sons.

(15.) Franklin de Oliveira, "Comerciarios--A luta pela sobrevivencia," O Cruzeiro, June 19, 1948.

(16.) "Os engenheiros sao generals na batalha da industrializacao," Diretrizes, October 21, 1943.

(17.) Arnaldo Nunes, "Contador e literature," Revista Paulista de Contabilidade (January, 1945), 10-11.

(18.) Victor Vianna, "O esforco das elites e a depressao monetaria," Syndike 1 (September, 1935), 29.

(19.) Joao Lyra Filho, Problemas das classes medias (Rio de Janeiro, 1942).

(20.) See, for example, Vida Carioca (February, 1934).

(21.) Susan Besse, Restructuring Patriarchy: The Modernization of Gender Inequality in Brazil, 1914-1940 (Chapel Hill, 1996).

(22.) Isabela de Almeida Serrano, Minha casa (Rio de Janeiro, 1945), 142.

(23.) See Revista do Professor (Orgao do Professorado Paulista) 1 (March, 1934); Revista da Associacao dos Funcionarios Publicos do Estado de Sao Paulo 2 (October-November, 1934), 18-9; O Cruzeiro (September, 1946), 51.

(24.) Instituto Brasileiro de Opiniao Publica e Estatistica (IBOPE), "Pesquisa sobre padrao de vida," Sao Paulo, 1946.

(25.) Vida Domestica (January, 1932).

(26.) Vida Domestica (July, 1935).

(27.) Vida Domestica (August, 1937).

(28.) Jose Moacir do Andrade Sobrinho, "Composicao do vencimento e niveis do renumeracao do funcionario publico," Revista do Servico Publico 4 (February, 1940), 12.

(29.) Humberto Bastos, "Progresso tecnico e padrao de vida," O Brasil no apos-guerra (conference sponsored by Instituto de Organizacao Racional do Trabalho, January, 1944).

(30.) IBOPE, "Pesquisa, sobre poder aquisitivo dos leitores da revista O Cruzeiro," Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, November, 1946.

(31.) IBOPE, "Estudos sobre as condicoes de vida do comerciario em Sao Paulo e Campinas," July, 1947.

(32.) IBOPE, "Estudo de mercado pare Estabelecimentos Canada," Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, December, 1944.

(33.) Other IBOPE studies support this view. In one, nearly half of all middle-class people polled who said they planned to buy a home wanted a garage, even though more than 80 percent of them did not yet own cars. Another indicated that the middle class paid closer attention than the rich or the poor to advertisements for cars, tires, and home appliances.

(34.) O Cruzeiro, October 26, 1940.

(35.) Ruy de Azevedo Sodre, "Em defesa das classes medial," Primeiro Congresso Estadual da Familia Crista (Sao Paulo, 1957).

(36.) "O salario dos bancarios," memorandum to the Congressional Commission on Social Legislation, Syndike, (June, 1935), 5-9.

(37.) Sindicato dos Bancarios de Sao Paulo, "As divides e a estabilidade dos bancarios--memorial ao Ministro do Trabalho e Industria," (December, 1939), 13.

(38.) The implied comparison is that some male manual workers earned more than some male white-collar employees and professionals. It was not uncommon for male workers to earn more than women typists, teachers, or clerks.

(39.) IBOPE, "Pesquisa sobre padrao de vida," Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, July, 1946.

(40.) See Gilberto Freyre, The Mansions and the Shanties: The Making of Modern Brazil (Berkeley, 1986); Graham, House and Street.

(41.) See Besse, Restructuring Patriarchy.

(42.) Publicidade (September, 1940).

(43.) O Cruzeiro, December 8, 1945.

(44.) Serrano, Minha casa, 25.

(45.) Marialice Prestes, Problemas do lar (Sao Paulo, 1945), 17.

(46.) See Serrano, Minha casa; and, Nocoes de economia domestica (Sao Paulo, 1954); Prestes, Problemas do lar.

(47.) Dain Borges' evidence of a transition away from a patriarchal toward a more conjugal family among the upper and middle classes in Bahia between 1870 and 1945, especially given the conservatism of Bahian society, is suggestive of what was going on in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. See Dain Borges, The Family in Bahia, Brazil, 1870-1945 (Stanford, 1992).

(48.) Serrano, Minha casa, 170.

(49.) Serrano, Nocoes de economic domestica, 33. None of these ideas was new or exclusive to Serrano. They had been talked about for a number of years in magazines of the period aimed at parents, such as Crianca--Revista dos Pais, A Casa, Lar--Revista da Familia? as well as in magazines with wider concerns and larger circulations, such as O Cruzeiro and Vida Domestica.

(50.) Serrano, Minha casa, 61.

(51.) Ibid., 149.

(52.) Clovis Leite Ribeiro, "A classe media e as eleicoes de 19 de janeiro," Digesto Economico, 3 (April 1947), 71-7.

(53.) Sodre, "Em defesa das classes medias."

(54.) IBOPE, "Pesquisa de opiniao publica sobre materia politica realizada nesta capital no mes de setembro 1948." It is worth noting that 53 percent of the rich and 89 percent of the working class gave the same answer. While politics is rarely people's favorite topic, the higher number of the rich claiming interest in politics makes sense in light of the fact that two of the three major parties were dominated by political elites and powerful economic groups and widely perceived as serving their interests. The proportion of the working class down on politics was slightly greater than, although it does not seem to have dampened a distinct combativeness, at least among workers involved in organized labor.

(55.) See chapter 7 in Owensby, "`Stuck in the Middle.'"

(56.) Paschoal Lemme, Memorias, vol. 2 (Sao Paulo, 1988), 217.

(57.) See June Hahner, Emancipating the Female Sex: The Struggle for Women's Rights in Brazil, 1850-1940 (Durham, 1990).

(58.) Lyra Filho, Problemas das classes medias, 67; Sodre, "Em defesa das classes medial," 26.

(59.) The dominant trend in studies of the middle class has been to concentrate on culture and private life to the exclusion of politics writ large or to deal with public life and politics while bracketing personal and private life aside. Stuart Blumin, The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900 (Cambridge University, 1990) is characteristic of the former and Jaime Covarrubias, El Partido Radical y la clase media en Chile: la relacion de intereses entre 1888-1938 (Santiago, 1990) of the latter. My goal is to suggest the ways in which these two instincts were inseparable, yet in constant tension.

(60.) Serrano, Nocoes de economia domestica, 249. Serrano wrote this book, in part, to be used in secondary school home economics courses.

(61.) Lyra Filho, Problemas das classes medias, 93, 211, 237.

(62.) As with all literary sources, the issues of production and reception are complicated. In keeping with the social realism of the period (see Samuel Putnam, "The Brazilian Social Novel, 1935-1940)," Inter-American Quarterly 2 [April 1940], 5-12), most of these books described the experiences, expectations, and anxieties of people defined by work and home--ordinary people who went to great lengths to lead decent, respectable, and often unremarkable lives. A reviewer said of one best-seller that it evinced a "faithfulness to middle-class types." See Review of Dupre's Eramos seis in Diretrizes (June 5, 1942), 15. The authors hailed from backgrounds bespeaking familiarity with the lives they depicted. Their fathers tended to be pharmacists, school teachers, public functionaries, and commercial clerks. Their mothers commonly graduated from normal schools and worked as teachers. All had at least secondary-school education. A number attended university. They earned their livings as teachers, commercial clerks, journalists, lawyers, or public functionaries. All lived in or near a large city.

It is impossible to know precisely who or how many people read these books. Some were best-sellers; others were not. Context may be the best guide to the general audience to which they were addressed. They were published during a period of dramatic change in literacy and the book market--see Teresinha A. del Fiorentino, Prosa e ficcao em Sao Paulo: Producao e consumo (Sao Paulo, 1982). Perhaps central to this phenomenon was what one student of the matter has referred to as a "rising middle class" of book buyers, the large number of urban-dwelling, salaried employees and professionals that had emerged over the three decades after the

turn of the century. See Laurence Hallewell, O livro no Brasil (sua historia) (Sao Paulo, 1985). Within this new segment of the book market, leisure and a desire to make sense of a postoligarchical, industrializing, urbanizing, class-divided nation, led to an "obsessive preoccupation with personal and material matters," causing "the habit of reading to increase dramatically," as one accountant noted in 1936 (Arnaldo Nunes, Que e a contabilidade, 24). Or, as Hallewell has put it, the "ascent of a new middle class, preoccupied with its own problems and the problems of the country, were changing the perspectives of the country and creating a whole new market for Brazilian authors." See Hallewell, cited in, Lucia Lippi Oliveira, "Elite intelectual e debate politico nos anos 30," Dados 22 (1979), 70.

(63.) Along these lines for the working class in Britain and the United States, see Pamela Fox, Class Fictions: Shame and Resistance in the British Working-Class Novel, 1890-1945 (Durham, 1994); and Michael Denning, Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working-Class Culture in America (London, 1987). As in these books, I see the novels under consideration here as entrees to the yearnings, fantasies, and mythologies that so often go unexamined because they escape the sources available for institutional politics. This implies, of course, a vision of class as determined simultaneously by material and discursive processes. See Zachary Lockman, "Imagining the Working Class: Culture, Nationalism, and Class Formation in Egypt, 1899-1914," Poetics Today 15 (Summer, 1994), 157-90. Thus, the appearance of a linguistic representation of class, of which I am here looking at only a narrow slice, is inseparable from the existence of class as a social and political fact connected to tangible, lived experience.

(64.) See, for example, Joao Calazans, Pequeno burgues (1933); Jader de Carvalho, Classe media (Recife, 1937); Erico Verissimo, O resto e silencio (1943); Dupre, Eramos seis (1943).

(65.) The cynical tone of these novels regarding politics was echoed in the publications of white-collar associations during the 1930s and 1940s. Most criticized self-serving politicians for their failure to address the nation's problems. Further, government bureaucrats and some professionals began to partake of a language of technical competence, in which expertise was seen as an alternative to conventional, collective political activity.

(66.) On this struggle in Sao Paulo up to the 1950s, see Joel Wolfe, Working Women, Working Men: Sao Paulo and the Rise of Brazil's Industrial Working Class, 1900-1955 (Durham, 1993); and John French, Workers' ABC: Class Conflict and Alliances in Modern Sao Paulo (Chapel Hill, 1992).

(67.) Democrito de Castro e Silva, Classe media (Rio do Janeiro, 1945), 137.

(68.) Literate women received the franchise in 1932. However, they did not gain prominence within political parties throughout the period from 1930 to 1950.

(69.) Carvalho, Classe media; Calazans, Pequeno burgues; Erico Verissimo, Crossroads (1943); Dupre, Eramos sets; Verissimo, O resto e silencio.

(70.) Helio Chaves, Uma familia burguesa (Petropolis, 1952).

(71.) More work is needed on the way in which women understood and experienced politics and their own role in society. All but one of the novels treated here, anchoring politics in the domestic sphere, were written by men, although Dupre's Eramos seis was a runaway best-seller portraying a long-suffering mother whose mission in life was to hold her family and home together in the face of social upheaval and change.

(72.) These books do not represent middle-class sensibilities directly. Rather, they are evidence of, among other things, a contest over the role politics was to play in a class-divided society. I see them as glasses against a thick wall that make audible snatches of "the essentially antagonistic collective discourses of social classes" (Fredric Jameson, The Political Unconscious [Ithaca, 1981], 76). It is worth noting in this regard that a number of people who purported to speak on behalf of the Brazilian middle class during the 1930s and 1940s made arguments and used language almost identical to that of the novels, referring to the middle class as the "master cross beam of the country's equilibrium," as the key to "social peace," as the "most cultivated, the wisest, the most sensible" segment of the people, as a "powerful factor for equilibrium," and as a force for "moral resistance." See Tito Prates da Fonseca, "Sentido e valor das classes medias," Quarta semana de acao social do Sao Paulo (Rio de Janeiro, 1940), 190; Joao Lyra Filho, Problemas das classes medias: Economia, amor, desportos (Rio do Janeiro, 1942), 101; IBOPE, "Pesquisa do opiniao publica realizado no Distrito Federal pare O Observador Economico, com o objetivo do estudar a atitude do publica realizado no Distrito Federal pare O Observador Economico, com o objetivo do estudar a atitude do publico em geral e das chamadas classes conservadoras, em face das perspectives do ano de 1946 pare o Brasil," Rio de Janeiro, November-December, 1945; Clovis Leite Ribeiro, "A Classe media e as eleicoes de 19 de janeiro," Digesto Economico 3 (April, 1947), 71-2.

(73.) By now, a supposed connection between the middle class and some from or other of domesticity is commonplace. Indeed, the link has been sharply critized, since domestic ideology, broadly understood, can be found among elites as well as among workers. See Wahrman, Imagining the Middle Class, 378-80. In Brazil, it would be nonsensical to conclude that domesticity was exclusive to the middle class, since, as Gilbert Freyre (Casa Grande and Senzala) argued in the 1930s, family and house were central elements of Brazilian culture across social classes. My concern, therefore, is to indicate some of the ways in which a domestic ideology crossed with everyday life and political sensibilities among middle-class people. Middle-class domesticity doubtless diverged considerably from that of elites or workers, because of differing advantages and constraints in a market economy and differing class cultures. On the Brazilian working-class home and its relationship to the street in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, see Sidney Chaloub, Trabalho, lar, e botequim: O contidiano dos trabalhadores no Rio de Janeiro da Belle Epoque (Sao Paulo, 1986).

(74.) For example, a report issued in 1935 dismissed the idea of vacations for manual laborers because they did not cultivate the "comfort and sweetness" of home life," but instead spent long hours in the street, prey to "latent vices." This was in sharp contrast to the "intellectual worker," whose home was "welcoming and pleasant," allowing him to avoid "subaltern activities that would alter his

moral fabric." Otavio Pupo Nogueria, A industria em face das leis do trabalho (Sao Paulo, 1935).

(75.) See Da Matta, Casa e rua. It might be more accurate to think of this individualism as relational, that is, as an individualism oriented to an expanding labor market in which merit and patronage developed as parallel strategies for personal advancement. See Roberto D. Matta, Carnivals, Rogues and Heroes: An Interpretation of the Brazilian Dilemma (Notre Dame, 1991) See text accompanying Note 14.

(76.) While there is considerable overlap between the notions of public-private and house-street, their differences are striking. Whereas in its usual formulation public is identified with the state and private with market and family, house is identified almost exclusively with family intimacy, and street with market and state. At bottom, it is possible to see house-street as characterized by the difference between personal and impersonal spheres, an aspect of what Roberto Da Matta has called the relational universe. Compare Jurgen Habermas. The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society (Cambridge, MA, 1989) and Da Matta, A casa e a rua and Carnivals, Rogues, and Heroes. The distinction is important, for it suggests the ways in which a defining idea of modern society is made problematic by its encounter with Brazilian history and culture.

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