

*University Of London*

*The Discursive Construction of  
Sexuality and Domesticity in the  
Brazilian 1950s.*

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Doctor in Philosophy by  
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## *Abstract*

This thesis analyses models and messages of femininity in the Brazilian 1950s, as expressed in popular culture in general and by normative literature destined for women readers. These sources indicate ways in which post-war Brazilian society attempted to accommodate the appeal of new models and values as displayed in films and magazines to the traditional ethics. Conversely they also represent a discursive site in which attempts to reconcile the restrictions of that ethics with the exigencies of modern bourgeois society were negotiated.

First it deals with the foundations of the construction of femininity in Brazilian middle class terms discussing the gendered nature of Catholic doctrine and examining the cultural complex of honour and shame which informs traditional position of women in society. These patterns were transmitted by normative literature and reinforced through romantic novels.

The analysis of the process of courtship (*'namoro'*) and the description of the de-sacralization of woman in cartoons and pornographic comics reveal much about male values. *'Namoro'* was embedded with ideas of chivalry derived from courtly love which awarded woman a high and sacred position. It is sharply contrasted with representations of women in male popular fiction.

Images of woman in popular culture were frequently opposed to traditional representations which centred on modesty and passivity, and which either sanctified sexuality (in wedlock), or saw it as transgressive (outside the sphere of family). The new genre of advertisements, however, heightened sexual allure as the necessary element of femininity, contributing to 'domestication of seduction'. The counterpart of this seductive woman, was the new efficient housewife and mother, the target consumer of domestic appliances. Although at first glance it seems that imagery of consumption embodied the old dichotomy between the good asexual woman/mother/Mary/ and the bad/sexy /Eve/source of illicit pleasures, it will be argued that both are facets of the same ambiguous figure.

Those models were pivotal for establishing parameters for the self-evaluation of middle-class women. They were also important for the construction of new paradigms for Brazilian society. A society which was trying to adjust its own image to that of a new world where progress, modernisation and democracy were seen as global ideals.

*To my sister Adriana,*

*and*

*to Sophia and Victor, my lovely grandchildren born in these PhD years.*

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# Introduction

## *Femininity And Modernity*

In Brazilian social and political history, the period of 1945-1964 can be seen as a space between two dictatorships: the first, known as the *Estado Novo*, lasted from 1930 until 1945; the second began with the military coup of 1964.

The 1950s were marked by the modernising government of Juscelino Kubitschek, epitomised by the building of Brasilia – the new, modern and futuristic capital. Kubitschek expressed the dreams of the middle class: modernisation, development, industrialisation and democracy. However, this ideal of modernisation was established in the context of a changing society: on the one hand the consolidation of the process of industrialisation; on the other, the persistence of agriculture as an economic and political base. The new industrial élite was born in the coffee '*fazendas*' since industrial capital amounted to the re-application of part of the coffee capital. The new was entwined in the old.

The post-war years were characterised by the substitution of European cultural influences by those of North America, spread through the cinema, and the apparatus of the Hollywood industry – films and magazines – and Aid Programmes for Latin America. In place of the broad influence of Europe (chiefly France), Brazilians were confronted with the modern and technological character of the North American Way of Life. The time was represented as a Brazilian rupture with the past bringing the feeling that a new country – inspired by the Allies' ideals – was in the making.

In this context a 'new woman' emerged – the modern consumer – key personage for the middle classes in the 1950s project of nation. This new consumerism demanded the acquisition of appropriate competencies, the formation of a new body of knowledge, soon to be transformed into common sense. To side with the Americans, to emulate their way of life was to consume similar products and to build the technological home as a way of participating of a world infused by those ideals.

This thesis examines models and messages of Femininity provided by popular culture in general and by normative literature addressed to women in 1950s Brazil. These



sources indicate the ways in which society tried to accommodate the appeal of new models and values displayed in films and magazines with traditional cultural ethics. In the same way, they also tried to harmonise the restrictions of such traditional ethics with the exigencies of modern bourgeois society.

From the range of issues encompassed under the broad theme Femininity, this thesis focus on Sexuality and Domesticity, by investigating the interrelationship of these strands – the Catholic ideology of woman and sexuality, plus the traditional complex of honour and the messages of modernity from mass media which presented woman either as sexually seductive or as an efficient housewife– which were of particular importance in shaping white urban middle-class woman's experience in the 1950s.

## *Transnationalism and Globalization*

The debate on transnationalism and globalisation has become particularly important during the last decade in the context of cultural and economical changes in the world.

This work suggests that the seeds of the process can already be discussed in the 1950s Brazil where notions of identity particularly for the white urban middle classes were infused with images, ideas and aspirations derived from Western European and North American models and experiences. It is therefore been hard to document exactly what is specifically Brazilian in contradiction to the nature of US American and Europe middle class groups.

Models and messages displayed in the mass media — either imported or not — were pivotal in establishing guidelines against which middle-class women evaluated themselves. They were also important for the construction of a new model for Brazilian society – a society born in the post-war years, which was trying to adapt its own image to a new world in which progress, modernisation and democracy were seen as universal aim.

It can therefore be argued that a certain fusion was taking place, in which the most private and personal level of the self became encompassed into macro political relationships and market.

## *Sex and Gender*

During the past twenty years feminist theory and gender analysis have underlined the problems associated with treating 'woman' as a universal category, divorced from social,<sup>1</sup> historical, class conditions. However, 'shared' experiences, such as motherhood or

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<sup>1</sup> Including here the conditions derived from age, race and sexual orientation.

biological attributes while carrying context specific meanings refracted through a diversity of others positions, nevertheless are a common ground that allow women themselves to subscribe to the ideology of a supposed universality or uniformity of women's culture and condition.

In some strands of feminist theory it is postulated that: on the one hand there is sex, which belongs to the order of nature, it is 'what ought to be' since "nature is biological, something inbuilt and fixed into our bodily selves"<sup>2</sup> and cannot be changed. To emphasise the biological apparatus of femaleness means stressing similarities between women, searching for a supposed 'woman's nature or essence,' assuming the universality of the category woman and of their submission and inferior social condition. This theoretical position – essentialism<sup>3</sup> – is criticised for being ahistorical, and, among other accusations, charged of generalising the experiences of those who had formulated it – that is the experiences of intellectual white women from the 'First World.'

On the other hand, there is 'gender' which is socially constructed, belongs to the order of culture, over which political action can take place transforming women's position in society. It is assumed that nature gave women the biological apparatus of the female sex. It determines the configuration of a woman's body, the texture of their skin, the inflection of their voice. Society by impressing meaning onto those characteristics, transforms femaleness in Femininity. To stress culture means to dismiss generalisations about women, taking into account historical constraints plus race, age, social class and ethnicity. This theoretical viewpoint known as Social Constructionism can be synthesised in the De Beauvoir's well quoted phrase: "One is not born a woman, bur rather becomes one."

Paradoxically, Constructionism is grounded on the idea of an essential body, given by biology. However, there is no assurance about this supposed natural body, or about the category woman, and even the autonomous cultural process of gender construction has been challenged.

Laqueur and Gallagher's research<sup>4</sup> reveals that the idea of an opposition between men's and women's bodies is not in fact universal but historically dated, belonging to a specific social and political context of the nineteenth century, which we inherited. In the eighteenth century woman's body was regarded as complementary and as an inversion of man's. Susan Bordo, following Foucault,<sup>5</sup> points out that

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<sup>2</sup>BIRKE, 1992:66.

<sup>3</sup> For its analysis and of the so called 'methodological essentialism' see MARTIN, 1994.

<sup>4</sup> LAQUEUR 1987; LAQUEUR AND GALLAGHER, 1987, in general.

<sup>5</sup>According to Susan Bordo, this refers to FOUCAULT 1980:155; which corresponds to FOUCAULT, 1977 in Brazilian translation.

*[T]he body, far from being some fundamentally stable, cultural constant to which we much contrast all culturally relative and institutional forms, is constantly 'in the grip' [...] of cultural practices. Not that is a matter of cultural repression of the instinctual or natural body. Rather, there is no natural body. Cultural practices, far from exerting their power against spontaneous needs, 'basic' pleasures or instincts or 'fundamental' structures of body experience, are already and always inscribed [...] on our bodies and their materiality, their forces, energies, sensations and pleasures [...] Our bodies no less, than anything else that is human, are constituted by culture.<sup>6</sup>*

Hence the 'naturalness' of sex is called into question. As Butler points out "it would make no sense to define gender as the cultural interpretation of sex, if sex itself is a gendered category.' The construction of gender as a pure cultural issue is no less problematic: individuals are allocated to a gender on the basis of their sex.<sup>7</sup> Although in De Beauvoir's quotation there is no indication that the one who becomes a woman must be a female, says Butler, in fact in all societies there are two genders just as there are two sexes.<sup>8</sup> a statement that anthropologists would regard with reservation. Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfarne point out that it is necessary to investigate what one means by the use of terms such as 'man'/'woman' or masculinity/femininity – concepts whose meaning are taken for granted – to perceive 'to what extent [one's] own notions of gender are likely to intrude in [one's] attempts to understand gender relations among the others.'<sup>9</sup> The very notion of gender categories, say these authors

*usually presupposes an inconvertible gender dichotomy, which in turn rests on notions of essential biological difference...[leaving] us with the dichotomous categories men and women which are assumed to be 'unitary...fixed and polarised entities.'<sup>10</sup>*

Ethnographies about men and masculinity in the context of male travestism and homosexuality can enlighten this debate. In such circumstances, masculinity and femininity are more clearly revealed as "fluid and situational" notions, since these gendered identities are negotiated, defined and redefined in social interaction. They also question the perception of an absolute universal division of humankind in only two opposite sexes.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>BORDO, 1992:82. See also BUTLER, 1990: first chapter; CORNWALL & LINDISFARME, 1994: 35.

<sup>7</sup>For an analysis of the several theoretical approaches enclosed in the expression 'social construction' see VANCE, 1992: 132-145.

<sup>8</sup> BUTLER, *ibid.* 8.

<sup>9</sup>CORNWALL & LINDISFARME, *ibid.*: 2.

<sup>10</sup>CORNWALL & LINDISFARME, *ibid.*:35/36.

<sup>11</sup>See CORNWALL, 1994. For an early analysis of gender ambiguity in Brazil, see LOBERT, 1979 who analyses [in another theoretical framework] the trajectory of a theatrical group of travesties (as the publicity of the show indicated) – or androgynous persons (as the intellectual favoured to label) – the *Dzi Croquettes*– Its members defined themselves as being 'neither man nor woman but folks, just like you... excepting for the absence of two things – sex and destiny.' They transgressed every code of sex/gender behaviour mixing signs of male/female appearance (such as using make-up as women, whilst keeping their beard), vestments, gestures, and body deportment.

Cornwall and Lindisfarne criticise the idea that 'men' and 'women' are unformed individuals to whom

*Once children are given a gender label as either 'male' or 'female,' it is presumed that this monolithic identity adheres throughout their lives. In such arguments, people are socialised into sex/gender roles and they play them more or less well thereafter.*<sup>12</sup>

Butler also raises several questions about the manner or the mechanisms by which gender is constructed. Could it be constructed differently, or does its constructedness imply some form of social determinism? Does "construction" suggest that certain laws generate gender differences along universal axes of sexual difference? What sense can we make of a construction that cannot assume a human constructor prior to that construction? She concludes that "gender is as determined and fixed as it was under the biology-is-destiny formulation. In such a case, not biology but culture, becomes destiny."<sup>13</sup> Judith Butler assumes that "gender is not to culture as sex is to nature."<sup>14</sup> and suggests:

*Gender ought not to be conceived merely as the cultural inscription of meaning on a pre-given sex [...] gender must also designate the very apparatus of production whereby the sexes themselves are established. [...] Gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which "sexed nature" [...] is produced and established as pre-discursive, prior to culture, a politically neutral surface on which culture acts.*<sup>15</sup>

The question about the relationship between sex and gender has also to do with the dichotomy between body and mind. Lynda Birke's critique of the emphasis on social Constructionism is that the uneasiness with biological explanations because of their political implications, led feminists to almost forget the biological constraints of the body, as if only mind must be considered. As Birke says, "ideas of social construction cannot adequately account for bodies that bleed, excrete, desire or hurt," or we could add, for bodies that age. And it is not only a matter of cultural representations around becoming old (in a society which so much values youth and the beauty of young bodies.) It has also to do with the progressive physical incapacity brought by age. Whether the way we deal with it is ideological, the physical incapacity in itself is not.

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<sup>12</sup>CORNWALL & LINDISFARNE, *ibid.*:35/36.

<sup>13</sup> BUTLER, *ibid.*:7-8.

<sup>14</sup>*ibid.*:7. My emphasis.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*:7. Judith Butler's aim is to scrutinise the "foundational categories of identity – the binary of sex, gender and the body [...] shown as productions that create the effect of the natural, the original, and the inevitable." For her work "center on – and decenter – such defining institutions" phallogocentrism and compulsory sexuality," establishing a dialogue with, plus criticising and working on the ambiguities of premises taken by Lacan, Levi-Strauss, Foucault, Mary Douglas, De Beauvoir, Witting, Irigaray, Kristeva. At the end she proposes "a set of parodic practices based in a performative theory of gender acts that disrupt the categories of body, sex, gender and sexuality and occasion their subversive resignification and proliferation beyond the binary frame. BUTLER, *ibid.*: preface. For the purpose of the discussion of this thesis, her considerations about sex gender and the body in the first chapter had been more useful.

*Western culture for centuries tended to repudiate the body – whether in favour of rational thought or in favour of an immortal soul. Thus, both Christian theology and laic philosophy was in accord that the biological part of our beings is what we share with animals, it has nothing to do with human dignity, being inferior and of less importance.<sup>16</sup> In a way these feminist theories follow a centenary tendency.*

Therefore, Birke says, feminism needs to move beyond the simple dichotomies of body/mind, body/soul, sex/gender that are so pervasive, as it needs to move beyond the critiques of biological determinism. On the one hand, this movement involves continuing to thoroughly deny “crass determinism wherever it occurs,” attacking manifestations of racism, sexism and other forms of social prejudice rooted in physical differences. On the other, it involves considering that we experience these questions as embodied persons, and that the body must be brought to feminist theorising.

## *Femininity*

Susan Browmiller takes a different focus on this issue, She analyses how culture gives meaning to biological femaleness,<sup>17</sup> indicating some the ways in which an aesthetic of difference is constructed in relation to the female body – voice, movement and skin – a feminine moral code of behaviour, and a domestic environment.

*an aesthetic that was bafflingly inconsistent at the same time that it was minutely, demandingly concrete, a rigid code of appearance and behaviour defined by do and don't-do's [...] Femininity in essence is a romantic sentiment, a nostalgic tradition of imposed limitation [...] something that women always seem to have had more in the past: not only in the historic past of prior generations, but in each woman's personal past as well – in the virginal innocence that is replaced by knowledge, in the dewy cheek that is coarsened by age, in the 'inherent nature' that a woman seems to misplace so forgetfully whenever she steps out of bounds<sup>18</sup>*

Having Femininity will mean at the same time, the unveiling of the uniqueness of female sex,<sup>19</sup> and the continuous apprenticeship of this unveiling. Femininity was learned from a gendered perception of things,<sup>20</sup> from the lace, frills and ribbons used in girl's dresses; from dolls and tea sets and their 'let's pretend to be mother or housewife games,

<sup>16</sup> For the Christian thought about the body see chapter 2 of this thesis.

<sup>17</sup> BROWNMILLER's analysis, is not reduced to genitals and the reproductive issue. (BROWNMILLER's 1984)

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.:2.

<sup>19</sup> As a counterpoint to feminism, a very common truism became the statement I prefer to be feminine rather than feminist – as if they necessarily had to be in total opposition.

<sup>20</sup> In Portuguese the gender of the words is determined by the letter they end in, and there is not a neutral gender for things. Thus the representation of things as masculine or feminine is clearly present in language. Brazilian folklore is full of this sort of associations, such as the dropping knives or forks means that an unexpected male guest is soon to arrive, just as dropped spoon would announce a woman visitor. Fork (*garfo*) is a masculine word whilst spoon (*colher*) is a feminine one. The author of a Brazilian etiquette book captures this sort of representation: “The Portuguese were right when they considered 'fork' a masculine word, since it is the most important piece of the cutlery “ (Carmem D'Avila, *Boas Maneiras* : 173).

known in Brazil as '*brincar de casinha*.' But even without the appropriate toys and clothes, lessons in the art of being feminine were set in everywhere coming from fairy tales, advertisements, comics and soap operas, and were embedded in every other little gesture and ritual girls learned from an early age.<sup>21</sup>

Femininity is also associated with what can be called 'woman's culture,' whose supposed universality remains at the root of magazines for women. However, such 'subculture' varies greatly and depends on variables such as social class, ethnicity, historical, economic and political contexts. Femininity is strongly associated with issues such as motherhood and family life, beauty and fashion, love and romance and cooking and home crafts. It does not matter that not all women are mothers or wives;<sup>22</sup> nor even that social class differences transform all these issues into very different realities.

## *Domesticity*

At the turn of the century, people in Brazil had experienced the influence of the ideology of domesticity disseminated through medical discourse and the feminine press.<sup>23</sup> This ideology ran parallel to the development of the Industrial Revolution and marked a definite separation of the gender roles: the public sphere or the domain of work, business and money, became firmly identified with the masculine role. By contrast, the home, family, domestic or private sphere became the domain of women. However, far from being an industrialising country where the substitution of home-made production by industrial goods was being built up, as in Europe, Brazil was still an agrarian and slave country and had only recently surpassed the colonial restrictions against any form of industry. For some authors, then the adoption of the ideology of domesticity was nothing but another idea 'out-of-its-proper place.'<sup>24</sup>

The ideology of domesticity returned in the period after the Second World War in Europe and USAmerica:

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<sup>21</sup> Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus* and *embodiment* give theoretical support to this assumption.

<sup>22</sup> WINSHIP, 1987.

<sup>23</sup> The home became the place for social life, and woman revered as a source of virtues, responsible for the spiritual legacy of society. In Europe and North America, this Cult of Domesticity seems to have been first a middle-class issue in the eighteenth century that slowly spread both to upper and to working classes. The Victorian Age marked its zenith. See among others authors COTT, 1977; HALL, 1979; DAVIDOFF & HALL, 1987; MATHEWS, 1987; SMITH, 1981; WELTER, 1966.

<sup>24</sup> In reference to SCHARWZ, 1981. For an analysis of the importation of European life-style at the turn of the century see NEEDEL, 1987.

[It was]the time when family was recemented, when women were redomesticated, their role redefined as that of home-maker, when progress itself had a domestic incarnation, with the kitchen at the centre of the new developments in consumer technology. It is seen as the time when all the outward signs of sexual difference were re-emphasised through style and fashion, and women's Femininity pronounced in the clothes of the New Look.<sup>25</sup>

Brazil had a small participation in the war as an auxiliary corps of the US Army. However, the war was brought home to Brazilian middle-class families through broadcasting news, illustrated magazines and mainly through North American cinema. Brazilians clung body and soul to the Allies' ideals, and sympathetically participated in what was running in Europe. In spite of sharing some war experiences such as black-out and rationing of foods, there was no substantial change in women's roles. Thus, one could hardly think about a return to a previously existent 'normality,' as in the countries directly affected by the war. **Notwithstanding 'progress' had a similar domestic incarnation: industrialisation was putting electric appliances in the market; likewise the controversial New Look was not only publicised on the magazines as adapted to Brazilian taste by Alceu Penna.**<sup>26</sup>

This thesis argues that the end of the war was also lived in Brazil as a rupture with the past. It was lived as the victory of the ideals of freedom and democracy, making hideous the image of the country being ruled by a dictator.<sup>27</sup> In this sense, post-war domesticity in Brazil acquires a new meaning, somewhat different from this ideology in North America and Europe. It reached the Brazilian middle classes by means of film and magazines. Advertisements not only publicised new appliances and products as they also displayed models for a new life style which were very much centred in the modern home. So, far from being an out-of-the-place idea, it finds its proper meaning and place in the Brazilian context.

### *Metaphors for the Construction of Femininity*

Conventional views, both in popular discourse and in academic analysis have often represented the role of women as an opposition between two poles. Accordingly the good woman, chosen to be 'the wife and mother of children', 'the shadow behind the great man' who raises a family and is the faithful support of its head; or 'the other', the bad, the dangerous and seductive siren who is the instrument of evil, bringing ruin and destruction to man. The extent to which these themes work in practice will be in consideration in my work. The conception of the woman's role as oscillating between two images has its simile in the traditional opposition between Eve and Mary, principal figures in Catholic imagery.

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<sup>25</sup> HERON, 1985: 4.

<sup>26</sup> He was the fashion designer of the magazine *O Cruzeiro*. See also chapter 6 of this thesis.

<sup>27</sup> It is widely accepted that the end of the war was a direct cause for the end of Vargas' s dictatorship.

The conception of the woman's role as oscillating between two images has its simile in the traditional opposition between Eve and Mary, principal figures in Catholic imagery.

The construction of Femininity in the 1950s was also the result of the tension between these poles: Eve and Mary, new and old, tradition and modernity.<sup>28</sup> These roles were not dichotomous in radical opposition, but composites of elements where the old and the new were interrelated, or existed side by side. They can be represented as the two sides of the same coin; part of a patchwork pattern or as the moving design of a kaleidoscope.

The patchwork or the kaleidoscope provide useful metaphor for analysing the construction of Femininity, for such processes implicate an assemblage of "fragments into intricate and ingenious design."<sup>29</sup> The resulting motif combines elements of tradition and modernity not at random, but following an elaborate pattern constrained by historical, social and class boundaries.

The metaphor of the kaleidoscope has an advantage over quilting because it incorporates the idea of mobility which provides an image for process. The construction of Femininity, in general terms is a never-ending practice; therefore, it cannot be grasped as a static design, it is always in the making. However, the kaleidoscope drawing is made on a thin surface. Its elements are supported only by a thin plate; in this way it cannot incorporate the idea of multiple layers as quilting does.

The dynamic of the quilting process is different because it has a finished result which is static. On the other hand, the superposition of multiple layers, which are essential to set off the pattern, is a good image for the construction of Femininity. In this case the deeper layers constitute the social imaginary which constitutes the inlay setting of the 'pattern of Femininity.' This pattern of Femininity incorporates the contradictions of generation and life time it is specific to each social, political and historical context, and it is different for each social class.

The metaphor of quilting can also be considered useful for the construction of the female self, because of its fragmentary character: the idea of sorting fragments, piecing them together in a pattern whose final design usually allows several forms of reading.

This thesis intends to sort the data, piece them together in patterns that are non-linear, non-hierarchical.<sup>30</sup> As in the patchwork the data are arranged in many centres, "with no climactic place or moment"<sup>31</sup> or hierarchy. When these parts are put together the object

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<sup>28</sup> According to Susan Besse, this question had already been raised in the 1920s, when middle-class Brazilian women were "caught between the modern image of the flapper, and the Catholic model of the pure mother." BESSE, 1983.

<sup>29</sup> SHOWALTER, 1986.

<sup>30</sup> Laura Balbo suggests that quilting can provide a new language for feminist academics, and the construction of a thesis thought as making a quilt is inspired by her text. BALBO, 1987.

<sup>31</sup> SHOWALTER, 1986, *ibid.*: 226.



is revealed. While it is possible that there is more than one reading of the pattern, this reading does not exhaust its possibilities. As Elaine Showalter points out, there is an analogy between the process of patchwork and language, first on the level of the sentence (piecing fragments to form a pattern), the level of the structure ('patchwork is the joining of these patterns into an overall design), and finally the images, motifs or symbols that form the 'figure in the carpet' that unifies the work. Although she has fictional work in mind, the same analogy can also be applied to women's academic study.

## *The Social Imaginary*

The imaginary is a psychoanalytic concept developed by Lacan in his reading of Freud.<sup>32</sup> This concept has also been appropriated by Luce Irigaray in *Speculum de l'autre femme*, in her analysis of the Freudian theory of women's psycho-sexual development. Rather than giving an alternative account, Irigaray offers a critique of a dominant representation of sexual difference. As Margaret Whitford points out, she is in fact psycho-analysing the psychoanalysts, analysing their imaginary, that is, the unconscious fantasy underlying the Freudian or Lacanian explanatory systems. In the way Irigaray uses this concept the "imaginary jumps out of the domain of the technically psychoanalytic into the domain of social explanation, and becomes a social imaginary signification."<sup>33</sup> As Margaret Whitford points out, quoting Castoriadis: "Compared with individual imaginary signification, [social imaginary signification] is infinitely vaster than a fantasy."<sup>34</sup>

The Feminine Social Imaginary in the sense used here, could be seen as a construct of the collective subconscious that is shared on the grounds of gender in relation to class and generation. It is shaped by historical context and formed by categories and codes, ideology and consciousness, myths, fantasies, images and symbols, representations, and other models that articulate experience. Thus it encompasses "the culturally available symbols that evoke multiple and contradictory representations " of gender roles, and "normative concepts that set forth interpretations of the meaning of the symbols that attempt to limit and contain their metaphorical possibility."<sup>35</sup> as Joan Scott points out:

*These concepts are expressed in religious educational, scientific, legal and political doctrine and typically takes the form of a fixed binary opposition, categorically and unequivocally asserting the meaning of male and female, masculine and feminine.*<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Although authors such as BUTLER 1990 and SCOTT, 1988 consider Lacan's theory as a key to understand the construction of gender, it is out of the scope of this thesis to explore the psychoanalytic dimension of the imaginary.

<sup>33</sup> WHITFORD, 1988: 117.

<sup>34</sup> WHITFORD, *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> SCOTT 1988:43.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

To analyse the feminine social imaginary is to rise questions about symbolic representations and the means by which they are constructed and invoked in specific historical contexts. It is to discover the nature of the sources for its construction and the possible debate between sources regarded as in opposition.<sup>37</sup> It also requires us to disentangle the apparent fixity of supposed dominant models, its confrontation with and accommodation of alternative patterns of behaviour.

Thus, 'imaginary' is taken here as a social and cultural template laid down in early childhood and permanently actualised which informs one's behaviour in specific social and cultural contexts. In this sense it is paralleled by Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*.<sup>38</sup> The concept of Imaginary is drawn from these two ideas, to express the tacit unconscious formation of actions and orientations.

## *Methods And Sources*

This thesis examines the process of accommodation of "modern" and "traditional" values in the construction of the new feminine role – the modern consumer, a key personage for the 1950 project of nation. She had to learn how to be 'modern' without loosing the traditional virtues determined by both the Catholic religion and the cultural complex of honour.

The key words of the decade were new, progress, modernisation, development. Thus, individuals and their families were to face the challenges and perplexities derived from the perception of living new times of rupture with the past.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, specific discourses, such as the religious, the medical or the journalistic, provided the public with directories – sometimes in contradiction – of norms, practices, attitudes one should learn and follow to be in accord, or to struggle against the modern times. It is a hypothesis of this thesis that there was a subtle process of reconciliation of these discourses seen in opposition.

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<sup>37</sup> Such as the traditional Catholic doctrine and the modern discourse of the mass media.

<sup>38</sup> "the system of durable transposed structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is as principles which generate and organise practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. Objectively 'regulated' and regular without being in any way the product of obedience to rules, they can be collectively orchestrated without being the product of the organising action of a conductor." BOURDIEU 1990:53.

<sup>39</sup> BESSE, 1983; NEEDEL, 1987; COSTA 1982 – to mention only a few researchers – have illustrated how analogous processes had respectively happened in the inter-war period; at the turn-of-the-century; or in nineteenth century Brazil. But never before had it been anchored in a co-ordinated action for the development of the country to the extent that occurred in J.K.'s government.

Thus, the objectives of this thesis are : to analyse the message of such [apparent or not] contradictory discourses; to investigate the models they provided to the female public; to unveil the 'translation' of words which synthesised the ideology of 'developmentalism' into daily life signs; to expose the process by which these themes of 'developmentalism' were interwoven in the construction of the feminine role, were to become deeply rooted in the quotidian of urban middle class families shaping a new domestic environment. It will explore the ways in which modernisation, progress and development were translated into the terms of daily life, and what they may have meant to teenagers or housewives then.

Attention will concentrate on models, norms and conventions rather than experience. Instead of describing what individuals of specific and delimited groups 'actually' did, this thesis seeks to display a system of rules and tacit agreements that provided the context for understanding the discourse of the religious manuals and the mass media of the period.

These written discourses are analysed in the historical context of their production and consumption. Foucault's accounts about discourse provide the broad theoretical support for such analysis. Discourses are ways of producing knowledge, of deploying power, and shaping the world according to that knowledge. They are not 'essentially' true or false but relative. That is, they can only be understood within the framework of, or in confrontation with other discourses.

## *Methodological Issues*

### *The Fifties*

A word must be said about the time frame of the *fifties* as used in this thesis, since it is impossible to circumscribe the analysis of the decade into rigid temporal limits. Thus in several senses we have the *long fifties*, paraphrasing Hobsbawm,<sup>40</sup> whilst in others the period is limited to a short 5 years span.

Politically or economically the more definitive changes occurred in 1945 and then after 1964, transforming the *fifties* into the period between two dictatorships – of Vargas' and the military, (1945/1964). Cultural changes started still earlier with the North American aid programs to Latin America and the propaganda of the Allies through cinema and magazines, changing habits of consumption and social behaviour. From this viewpoint the starting point of the period goes back to the earlier 1940s. Finally, in popular vision, the

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<sup>40</sup> In an analogy to "the brief 20th century." HOBSBAWM, 1995.

1950s or the 'golden years'<sup>41</sup> as it was to be known, refers more properly to the short period of JK's government (1955-1960), with its ideology of progress and development. For this reason, the data of this thesis do not come exclusively from books and magazines published in the 1950s. It also draws on material published prior to 1950, but still influential in the decade.

## *The Middle Classes*

The reason why this thesis focuses on the middle classes derives from the choice of the written discourse as its source of data. The **white urban middle-class** readership was the main target of the publishing houses, since they represented the majority among the few who had means to consume books and magazines in the 1950. Advertisements for the new products were also aimed to the same public. By displaying middle-class daily concerns mixed with upper-class signs and life-style, the media possibly provided elements for middle-class fantasies/projects/aspirations of upward mobility. It is also assumed that the various middle-class strata consumed in selective form parts of the whole set of printed material at their disposal, and that its influence was subtle, ambiguous and indirect.

The problem with conceptualising the middle class starts from its very denomination, since it combines a concept linked to the productive process (class) and other referred to its position in the system of social stratification (middle). Thus some authors as Decio Saes, recommends that they should be called middle strata or middle segments - a solution criticised by others as Paulo Sergio Pinheiro who do not regard it as a definite way of solving the question. The use of the denomination in the plural also calls attention to its heterogeneity.

Therefore the understanding of the so-called middle classes should focus on the ethos, world-view, consumption patterns and moral values of specific groups rather than on economic indicators such as wages and income: it does not matter how much one earns but how and why one choose to spend it.<sup>42</sup>

## *The Formation of the Brazilian Middle Classes*

The formation of the Brazilian middle classes in the nineteenth century was linked to the expansion of the agrarian capitalism towards exportation.<sup>43</sup> It brought the need to create new urban services to support it. Bureaucratic staff were then recruited from among the 'dispossessed' members of the rural oligarchies, who found in urban services a way to

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<sup>41</sup> See HOBBSAWM, 1995 for an analysis of the 1950s as the 'golden years' in the rest of the world.

<sup>42</sup> Of course, one's life-style is constrained by the amount of money one has. See VELHO's work in general.

<sup>43</sup> The following data come from SAES, 1981; PINHEIRO, 1981.

lessen the effects of their downward mobility. To this impoverished landed gentry were reserved the higher places in the State bureaucracy, the liberal professions and the ruling positions in private administrations.<sup>44</sup> The social and familial ties between those 'dispossessed' and the ruling agrarian group lead them to perpetuate old practices linked to the ideology of patronage, chiefly in the recruitment of bureaucratic employees. They constituted the so called Traditional Middle Class. Since they shared the same ethos as the rural oligarchies they guaranteed the latter permanent political support.

The lower middle class, exemplified by those who occupied the less prestigious places in the state bureaucracy, banks, army and in the private offices linked to the urban working class, were the keystone of the 'populist' state. The lower middle class was recruited from among non-manual workers, and/or rural migrants of less prestigious families.

The 1930 Revolution caused a re-alignment of the economy after a crisis in the Brazilian agrarian-mercantile capitalism,<sup>45</sup> bringing the improvement and diversification of the industrial process towards an expanding internal market. It is important to note that the leading industries of the 1950s had their beginning as family enterprises in the 1930s, and they were the result of Vargas policies for gradual changes from an agrarian economy towards industrial capitalism.<sup>46</sup>

There was also a re-alignment of the political forces and deep changes in the relationship between the State and Society. Vargas create a centralising and intervening State enlarging the bureaucratic apparatus, thus multiplying the number of civil servants. However the expansion of state bureaucracy did not meet only rational economic needs but chiefly the political exigency of having jobs to be exchanged for political loyalties.<sup>47</sup> This particular form of a patrimonial state generates informal manipulative practices, such as the '*pistolão*'<sup>48</sup> and the '*panelinha*,'<sup>49</sup> for one either comes to terms with or benefit from that centralised bureaucratic system.

These practices were the urban equivalent to the rural forms of patron-client relationship.<sup>50</sup> based in mutual compromise and favours. Some of those relations starts as

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<sup>44</sup> SAES, 1981, *ibid.* : 43.

<sup>45</sup> Following the crash of the New York stock exchange, 1929.

<sup>46</sup> However coffee continued as the principal export crop.

<sup>47</sup> Those places were popularly called '*cabides de empregos*' (literally *hangers for jobs*).

<sup>48</sup> '*Pistolão*': It is an informal way to abbreviate or annihilate bureaucratic or legal dispositions. To have a '*pistolão*' means to be acquainted to someone who either is in a high bureaucratic position or can intervene with a request to break the official or legal apparatus. The word means both the act of intermediates and the person who does it.

<sup>49</sup> '*Panelinha*': It is a closed group of persons who co-operative works to obtain the best of advantages for its members. It also includes manoeuvres to guarantee a rotation among them to occupy the highest positions of power, thus assuring the maintenance of their privileges. For an analysis of '*panelinha*', *cabide de empregos* and *pistolão* see LEEDS, 1964, 1978. An analysis of the ideology which support those practices can be seen in the chapter, '*Voce Sabe Com Quem Está Falando?*' (Do You Know To Who You Are Talking To?). DA MATTA 1979, 1991.

<sup>50</sup> As used in FOSTER, 1963.

'*compadrio*'<sup>51</sup> which is a 'type of relationship set up between individuals primarily [...] through participation in the ritual of Catholic baptism.'<sup>52</sup> However the loyalty it establishes between the involved parts has very little to do with religiosity.

Among the middle classes there were either the 'dispossessed' landed gentry, and 'climbers' from the lower strata<sup>53</sup> which generated a different ethos and individual or family projects.<sup>54</sup> After 1956 a new middle class emerged following the consolidation of the industrialisation process. It was formed by the administrative and technical cadres of the 'modern' enterprises: managers, economists, industrial engineers originating either from the lower or the traditional middle-class strata. Contrary to their original strata which regarded the State either as a personal provider of their particular needs, or as another instance of their personal relationships or influences, the new middle class looked for impersonal political relationships. They were impregnated with ideas of order, rationality, maintenance of power and authority.

JK's government provided an opportunity for those who aspired to upward mobility, and for the absorption of different groups into the upper middle class (either the traditional or the new ones) - those who at that time diversified their professional activities, also becoming small entrepreneurs. Such groups differed through the manipulation of different forms of social capital,<sup>55</sup> signs of status and different patterns of consumption.

In line with other authors we have so far talked in general of the middle classes without considering the ethnic-racial issue. This does not mean ignoring the existence of an albeit smaller Brazilian black middle class. Brazil boasts that it is a racial democracy based on a historical process of miscegenation. Thus in theory, black as well as white persons could have occupied the new positions in the urban bureaucracy, chiefly the lower ones. It is

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<sup>51</sup> '*Compadrio*' has been widely described as a common practice in Latin North America. See MINTZ & WOLF, 1950; ; WOLF, 1966; FOSTER, 1963; ARANTES; 1982; FRANCO, 1983. See also chapter 9 of this thesis.

<sup>52</sup> MINTZ & WOLF, 1950, Authors says that the relationship between *compadres* and *comadres* outweighs the god-parent/ god- child relationship.

<sup>53</sup> Pierre Bourdieu points out that it is important to pay attention not only to the condition but also to the position in which one is placed in the social structure. Therefore, there are differences in life style, aspirations and projects between climbers (those who are upwardly mobile), strainers (those who unsuccessfully struggle for social ascendancy) and skidders (those who are downwardly mobile). BOURDIEU, 1982.

<sup>54</sup> Project is used here in Gilberto Velho's view point, after Alfred Schutz's and in the broader context of Dumont's analysis about individualism. Project differs from mere aspiration because, more than a desire, it is conscious, presupposes decision, planning, and a certain calculation about advantages, risks and losses of the actions ( not in the same sense of the 'homo oeconomicus,' says the author). Project is conceived and improved into a **dominion** of possibilities, historically and culturally circumscribed. VELHO, 1981'

<sup>55</sup> For instance those who Gilberto Velho called 'an aristocracy of the middle strata.' They invested massively in the education of their children, and valued intellectual and artistic capital. They also manipulated the sophistication of their consumption patterns as signs of exclusion and inclusion in their groups. See VELHO, 1975.

even possible that some of them also benefited from the ties of *compadrio* to obtain these jobs.<sup>56</sup>

However, as it is widely known, the myth of racial democracy veils an insidious process of prejudice and discrimination, synthesised in this 'joke': "In Brazil we don't have racial prejudice because here the blacks know their place." aptly analysed by George Reid Andrews.<sup>57</sup>

To know one's place means [willingly or not] to be accomplice to the prejudice, that is: not aspiring to the higher positions in white-collar jobs, to enrol in the better and exclusive schools, to join the Navy, or to become associated to the best social clubs which particularly play a key point in Brazilian middle-class sociability.

On the other hand, the long process of miscegenation gave rise to a large group officially called '*pardos*' who suffer prejudice in different ways, according to the precise colour of their skin and class position.<sup>58</sup> It is explained that in Brazil we have a colour and social prejudice<sup>59</sup> instead of a racial one, which is synthesised in the popular saying: if one is taken as white, white one is. This explains why the black middle classes so fully endorsed the ideology of whitening, mainly by means of marriage with persons of clearer skins, who would bring them "*moreno*"<sup>60</sup> offspring. It is popularly known — by blacks and whites — as *melhorar a raça* (to better the family's race), a particular black facet of the broader middle-class aspiration/project of upward mobility. Besides marriage, the whitening process also involved 'cultivating white friends and acquaintances, adopting norms and behaviour of white middle class' and chiefly 'economic success.'

However occasionally, many generations after a mixed parentage - and of being taken as white - someone can be born with unequivocal signs of black heredity. The usual explanation given for this fact speaks loudly about the Brazilian social imaginary. The usual phrase is "one of my parents is descended from a captive Indian woman captured by 'lasso' (*uma india pega a laço*) Important to note that the elements are always the same: an Indian woman never a man, and always forced, captured by a lasso. This explanation combines racial and gender stereotypes as will be analysed.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Even because in case of the black people, *padrinho* (godfather) used to be an euphemism for father.

<sup>57</sup> ANDREWS, 1991:134.

<sup>58</sup> I would venture that it is the combination of colour of the skin plus type of hair that matters.

<sup>59</sup> LAMBERT, 1972.

<sup>60</sup> *Moreno* means brunette, tanned, it is part of the white category. However euphemistically it can be used for black. In certain groups it is considered a more polite way of referring to them. For an analysis of this category see the appendix B of ANDREWS, *ibid*.

<sup>61</sup> See also my MS dissertation. OLIVEIRA SILVA, 1986.

From the earlier years in primary school Brazilian children learn ‘the fable of three races’ as Da Matta calls it.<sup>62</sup> In it is taught, among other stereotypes, that the Brazilian Indians were brave, courageous warriors who praised their freedom, and just died when taken in captivity.<sup>63</sup> That is why the Portuguese people had to take ‘the humble and docile African people’ as slaves because they easily adapted themselves to enslavement.

Thus one can be proud of a brave Indian ascendancy, moreover because it refers to supposedly older recorded genealogy. On the other hand, capturing by means of a lasso, even being sexually assaulted, brings the image of a wild prey running away, trying to defend herself against the hunter — more powerful because white and yet more because a man.<sup>64</sup> Thus, in a machista society one can also be proud of being descendent of a sexually insatiable macho man. The same would not happen in the case of an Indian greatgrandfather captured-by-lasso since it would also mean a sexually-driven white greatgrandmother.

The reverse of such explanation is the derisive category *ter um pé na cozinha* (to have ‘a foot in the kitchen’), an ironic euphemism for black parentage (a slave ascendent) which is widely accepted as the true reason for such signs.<sup>65</sup> It does not necessarily mean a cause for further prejudices or discrimination, provided the family has a good social and economical position, and that in general they are considered ‘*moreno claros*’ being taken as whites. This lengthy explanation shows how the signs of mixed heredity can be manipulated, and how the ambiguous category ‘moreno’ becomes useful in this whitening context.

George Andrew’s research shows how the Brazilian black middle class history shows a process of self-segregation as a kind of survival strategy. They considered themselves as part of the broader Brazilian middle classes,<sup>66</sup> sharing the same aspirations of upward mobility.<sup>67</sup> However, their aspirations for jobs, schools, clubs were systematically

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<sup>62</sup> That Brazilian people are descendent from the fusion of three races - indians, blacks and whites. DAMATTA, 1987.

<sup>63</sup> The other side of the coin is, that Indians were also so primitive that they could not learn how to do the required works.

<sup>64</sup> This is a common image in the manuals of sexual education in the 1950s. See chapter 3 of this thesis.

<sup>65</sup> The ‘indian grandmother’ is regarded as a probably invented tale.

<sup>66</sup> ANDREWS states: middle-class life in Brazil represents escape from the degraded poverty, stricken world of manual labour, that is the world of *povo*. ANDREWS, *ibid*: 171, 183-184.

<sup>67</sup> They sided the white ones in their prejudices against the poor *povo*, and against the immigrants. Likewise they shared the whitening ideology thought as a better solution to racial question, thus they firmly struggled against a policy of bringing to Brazil black American immigrants, because it would bar the whitening process. ANDREWS, *ibid*: 89; 151-152.



barred.<sup>68</sup> Either because they were not accepted at all, or because they had to prove that they were much better than any other person.<sup>69</sup> Thus

*Rejecting those who they regarded as their socially inferior, and in turn rejected by their white peers, their response was to construct a social world which would protect them from the hurts inflicted on them....<sup>70</sup>*

Therefore they created their own clubs and their own newspapers in the major towns of Sao Paulo, giving notice in social columns of their own events, parties and dances. These clubs aimed to emulate the white middle class sociability rather than organizing them politically. Hidden in these ghettos, they helped to stress the invisibility which surrounded the blacks in Brazilian society at large.

Such imposed invisibility in a veiled racist context explains why the media in the 1950s only exposed black images for their exoticism, as the case of the Afro Brazilian religion *Candomblé*. This was frequently portrayed in the *Chanchadas* or reports in the magazine *O Cruzeiro*.<sup>71</sup> These cults were popularly known as *Macumba*<sup>72</sup> with the pejorative connotation of witchcraft, backwardness and superstition. Black models were totally ignored by publicity, unless in the role of servants advertising traditional humble products such as washing soaps in bars.<sup>73</sup> As late as in the 1980s, this sort of prejudice could be explained blaming an abstraction 'the public' for it:

*To understand this matter it's necessary to understand what the word 'model' means. literally model means that which one wishes to imitate or which serves as an example.<sup>74</sup> Who in Brazil wants to imitate blacks? Middle class whites are going to want to have a black person presented to them as an example? Blacks are the poorest and the most backward part of the population, and this why advertising discriminates, because advertising has to reflect society, including its prejudices.<sup>75</sup>*

However, this thesis makes the point that there is little relevance in making a distinction between white and black middle classes, for the purposes of this thesis. the myth

<sup>68</sup> It is well known that the expression 'good appearance' in want advertisements is an euphemism for just whites accepted, as Andrews pointed out.

<sup>69</sup> 'we demand more of a black girl than of a white before we accept her. The situation is very delicate, and a coloured girl, in order to be respected must offer qualifications superior to those of the whites. (Head mistress of a Catholic girl school - early 1950s) quoted by ANDREWS, *ibid*.

<sup>70</sup> ANDREWS, *ibid*. p 141

<sup>71</sup> See chapter 1 for the utilization of Folclore in that magazine.

<sup>72</sup> This is a word seldom used nowadays. On the other hand, from the 1950s on it started a gradual process of whitening of the Afro Brazilian religion, through the popularisation of Umbanda among the white middle classes. This religion combine elements of *Candomblé*, popular Catholicism and Kardecism. For an analysis of such process see BROWN, 1977.

<sup>73</sup> That was not the case of the new fashionable washing powder soap newly launched on the market.

<sup>74</sup> The widely accepted as ideal model - a fair person with blue eyes - can be explained as the desire to emulate the Europeans. For the role played by the imported dolls to fix this model see FREYRE, 1962.

<sup>75</sup> Magazine *Afinal* September, 23, 1986, quoted by ANDREWS, *ibid*:309.

of racial democracy plus an ideology of whitening makes almost impossible to think about a purely dichotomous division between a white and a black middle class. The majority of the Brazilian population has mixed heredity and each person represent him/herself (or are represented) according to the combination colour of their skin/type of hair. It is one's social position in these cases which will assigned them to a group or to the other. Thus both the black as the white middle classes are actually formed by a vast number of persons of mixed parentage.<sup>76</sup>

In no way does this obliterate the prejudiced environment those assigned as black lived which frustrated or made almost impossible the fulfilment of their aspirations of upwardly mobility. However as George Reid Andrews<sup>77</sup> analysed, the black middle classes represented themselves as part of the broader Brazilian middle classes sharing the same values and aspirations of upwardly mobility. Thus it is highly reasonable to imagine that they read the same magazines and books, bought the same kind of product, and tried to have similar domestic environments. An analysis of their particular decoding of advertisements which only showed white models, goes beyond the scope of the present study.

## *Domesticity and Sexuality*

The revival of the cult of domesticity in the 1950s, reached the Brazilian middle classes by means of magazines and cinema, and their desire to emulate the American Way of Life as disclosed by reports about film stars' life style.<sup>78</sup> Cinema and publicity sold not only new products but build up new patterns of familiar behaviour, and brought up to date the discussion of sexuality. New exigencies over middle class life style made birth control an imperative, challenging the traditional view point of the Catholic church. This context makes domesticity and sexuality characteristic features of the 1950s in Brazil, explaining why these facets of Femininity are stressed in this study.

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<sup>76</sup> ANDREWS, 1991 analysis of demographic data, and of the archive of the newspaper *O Estado de Sao Paulo* (considered the most conservative Brazilian one) is claimed to provide evidence for his point that Brazilian racial system had been developed towards a bipolar white/black one. Further analysis of empirical data could testify whether people in daily relationships fixed themselves in the dichotomous way as IBGE does. (IBGE - *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística - Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics*)

<sup>77</sup> ANDREWS, 1991.

<sup>78</sup> Hollywood Stars had an ambiguous image of seduction and glamour, of successive marriages and divorces. But they were also photographed in their beautiful houses, shown with their children, and their daily life was revealed as if they were just ordinary wives and mothers, with nothing else to do but cooking, cleaning and childbearing

## *Bibliographic Sources*

The 1950s is represented as a period of transition when extensive political ideas of progress and modernisation were being divulged, and the middle classes had to accommodate contradictory messages and opposite schedules of prescribed behaviour. These ideas were 'translated' in terms of daily life concerns to be embodied by the public at large. The analysis of the construction of femininity in such context must encompass the investigation of these various directories of images, signs and messages provided to the feminine public in the 1950s. Only the analysis of bibliographic sources could provide such broad overview of the dominant ideologies in that period.

It is also assumed that interviews and other forms of recollecting memories of experience would bring their own distortions. As Peter Berger had pointed out one's own biography is re-written several times during a life span, since memories are re-evaluated and reconstructed according to the changes in one's standpoint. Thus one can have as many lives (or pasts) as viewpoints.<sup>79</sup> This was a definitive argument in deciding to limit the sources to the printed material of the period, instead of recollecting individual experiences.<sup>80</sup>

A critique of works supported only by bibliographic sources is that literature can not tell us how women actually behaved, nor the different readings made by women of different social groups, age, race or social classes. This author is aware that in spite of the power of the media in manipulating words, signs and images, they can not totally control the reception of their messages. It must be assumed that the receiver decodes the message in accordance with a previous repertoire of signs given by their cultural background and social class. This possibility of alternatives, ambiguities and contradictions, says Martin Pumphrey, transforms the private re-readings and transformations of mass images into "acts of co-option and resistance."<sup>81</sup>

However, this does not mean that the media are powerless to impose new attitudes and patterns of behaviour, but, more accurately, that the mass media provide the public with new inventories of images, signs and messages which are confronted with others and re-arranged in different ways to inform particular readings and uses, bringing to mind the image of the *bricoleur*.<sup>82</sup>

Feminist researchers face an impasse regarding this issue: whether to propose total detachment from their object or inclusion in it. As Elizabeth Gross has pointed out, the first means following the scientific mainstream, at the cost of disavowing the researcher's own

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<sup>79</sup> See the excursus about biography in BERGER, 1972.

<sup>80</sup> The exception was a few books about the period, as it will be explained below.

<sup>81</sup> PUMPHREY:1987:193. See also DURHAM, 1977.

<sup>82</sup> LEVI-STRAUSS, 1970.

position as women. In the second case, by self-inclusion with the object, researchers risk losing “the detachment needed to be considered scientific or objective, resulting in [...] some forms of academic secondariness.”<sup>83</sup> Yet, says Gross, in this case, “through the risks they thus take in questioning the most general assumptions and *givens* of intellectual inquiry, they retain some possibility of maintaining identities of women.” In the long run, this also must lead to the questioning of the shift between subject and object in research. In the present case, to this dilemma is also added the challenge of ‘exoticising’ the domestic, by researching one’s own culture.

This thesis seeks a balance between these positions. On the one hand by trying to keep a certain detachment from the object, even avoiding the use of the first person. On the other hand, by considering that no matter how hard this author tried to disassociate herself from her object or to exoticise Brazilian middle-class culture, it is not possible to forget that she is part of it. It is also not possible to erase from her biography her teenage years lived in the 1950s, and, consequently her participation in this process of conciliating traditional values with modern exigencies. How much these facts dictated the outline of the theme, or the selection of issues for this thesis is also impossible to estimate.

Thus, as in this case the boundaries of subject and object could sometimes be mixed up, and to limit the risks of subjectivism, this thesis also looked for examples – to support its analysis – in other sources: Brazilian literature written at that period such as novels of Jorge Amado and Erico Verissimo; the copious production of novels, chiefly serials, by feminine writers<sup>84</sup> and later works of non-fiction. These include memories,<sup>85</sup> cookery books,<sup>86</sup> biographies<sup>87</sup> and works of ‘reportage-romance,’<sup>88</sup> which provided accounts about everyday life in the 1950s.

## *Text and Images*

Another methodological question derives from the use of illustrations in several chapters of this thesis. It was a later decision to use pictures to enhance the description. The purpose was to provide the reader with the possibility of making his/her own reading of

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<sup>83</sup> GROSS, 1992.

<sup>84</sup>The majority of those feminine authors (Emi Carvalho de Bulhões, Lasinha Luiz Carlos Brito, Florence Bernard and the majority of Dupré’s novels) and their work had been simply forgotten. Few of them came to be considered ‘good literature,’ (this is the case of Rachel de Queiroz, Dinah Silveira de Queiroz, Lygia Fagundes Telles) or remained very popular up to today such as Sra. Leandro Dupré’s ‘*Eramos Seis*,’ successfully reprinted several times; and adapted to the TV (the last one in 1994.) It is interesting to note that now her books are published with her true name (María José Dupré) instead of her being disguised under the husband’s name.

<sup>85</sup>Such as LACERDA in MACEDO, 1982.

<sup>86</sup> LACERDA, 1990.

<sup>87</sup> JARDIM, 1973; ROCHA, 1993..

<sup>88</sup> Such as GABEIRA, 1982.

the material. There was an expectation of redundancy when text and illustration were put alongside. Actually the words could not always be fully omitted, and this provoked a methodological question which is worth mention.

As Roland Barthes demonstrated, each medium – oral speech, written discourse, photographs – has its own specificity.<sup>89</sup> They cannot be equated except in an imperfect way since the substance of speeches are words (verbal structure); whilst the substance of images are forms and lines in a spatial structure. Therefore text and image could only be equated with the ‘reality’ they are supposed to represent. However both the photographer and the writer display their own reading of such ‘reality,’ selecting how it must be shown and what must be emphasised or dismissed – by carefully choosing angles, lighting, filters in the first case;<sup>90</sup> and words in the other. The precise choice of a synonym can subtly convey irony, disdain, approbation – heightening the author’s own reading of the image. Thus, through that choice, readers are not only led to imagine the scene rather to imagine it under the writer’s own interpretation.

## *This Thesis In The Context Of Brazilian Anthropology*

### *Gender and Sexuality*

In the broad context of gender studies, this thesis attempts to connect two threads Catholic Religion and Media Culture, emphasising their approach to two of the main themes linked to Femininity: Domesticity and Sexuality, in relation to white, urban, middle-class woman. As each one of these themes have attracted less attention than others from researchers in Brazil, the analyses of their relation in a specific historical background is the major contribution of this thesis.

In Brazil, the emergence of woman as object of study is parallel to the rise of social movements engaged in the long struggle for the democratisation of the country in the 1970s – a broad context of struggle against any form of oppression.<sup>91</sup> That was the moment of the so called ‘Brazilian miracle’, a time of intensive official propaganda about the wonders of the

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<sup>89</sup> BARTHES, 1984.

<sup>90</sup> For theoretical studies about photography see BARTHES, 1984; BERGER, 1975; WILLIAMSON, 1985; COWARD, 1984.

<sup>91</sup> In the course of the movement pro Amnesty women’ s, black’s and homosexual movements emerged – which mixed their specific political fight to the political opposition to the military regime – culminating with the re-organisation of workers in their trade unions.

'Great Brazil,' masking a violent period of censorship, torture, persecution and fear for those in opposition to the regime. Thus the main characteristic of those social movements was the effort to give visibility to oppression. Academic research about woman was interwoven with feminist militancy<sup>92</sup> constituting the field as a feminine ghetto.<sup>93</sup> And it is no coincidence that researches focused almost exclusively on the socially oppressed, electing the poorer as preferential object – woman workers, peasants, prostitutes, domestic servants, or the feminine population of shanty towns.<sup>94</sup>

The researches conducted by *Fundação Carlos Chagas* is taken here to exemplify the evolution of gender studies in Brazil,<sup>95</sup> since it is representative of what has been done on this subject. Evaluations made of such production have considered three periods starting in 1975, after the publication of a special issue of the *Cadernos de Pesquisa* fully dedicated to women's studies. These periods are: a) 1975 – 1978 a time marked by the efforts to give visibility to woman as subject, as social and historical agent and to make visible oppression and inequality, In the academy the aim was to give legitimacy to women as object of study;<sup>96</sup> b) 1978 – 1985, this period is marked by the consolidation of woman as a legitimate research object, by the enlargement of themes beyond labour;<sup>97</sup> and a tendency to study woman in their familial context.<sup>98</sup> Representation, identity, and the symbolic emerged as important issues, and under Foucault's influence started the discussion about power, violence, and questioned the victimisation of woman.<sup>99</sup> Under these conditions the previous work of this author was conceived, which formed the basis of the present thesis; c) Finally

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<sup>92</sup> In fact it is necessary to make a distinction between women's movements and feminism, since they were not always coincident, but academic research has benefited from both. Actually woman's scholarship refers more to the fields of Sociology, and Anthropology, in some degree to Social Psychology and History; less to Education (see ROSEMBERG, 1992). Political scientists have not had much interest in this subject (PINTO, 1992) and in Literature and Literary Criticism, studies have had mainly the objective of giving visibility to woman writers or to the feminine characters, not always putting them in the context of feminist discussion (HOLANDA, 1992).

<sup>93</sup> Besides this identity of gender, there are also an identity of class, and of generation among the authors of women studies. CORREA, 1984:31.

<sup>94</sup> 'At that time, the grave question of Brazilian political situation was put above women's specific problems. And the concern about women worker's specific problems surpassed the attention given to the other women's problems. (COSTA, BARROSO & SARTI, 1985 : 6).

<sup>95</sup> It has had a key role in women's studies in Brazil, either promoting seminars in the early 1970s, publishing articles and special issues on the subject in its journal and chiefly awarding grants for researches on this field. See COSTA, BARROSO & SARTI, *ibid.*; COSTA & BRUSCHINI, 1992; HEILBORN, 1992a. For a broad review of women and family studies see CORREA, 1984.

<sup>96</sup> COSTA, BARROSO & SARTI, *ibid.*: 6. As these authors pointed out, at that time there was an extra effort to prove to the university and financial agency that the subject could be considered as scientific. In the Academy, these researchers were considered as feminists, and for the feminists they were labelled as just academics.

<sup>97</sup> For a review of the studies about woman in the labour force up to the 1980s see PENA, 1986.

<sup>98</sup> In such option was already implicit the idea that the concept that woman's role cannot be understand as an isolated issue but in its relation to other familial roles, and connection to considerations about power. See chapter 3 for the 'power of the weak.'

<sup>99</sup> See PONTES & GREGORI, 1982; PONTES, 1983; GREGORI, 1989. An earlier analysis about woman and power was made by FELDMAN-BIANCO, 1976.

from 1985 on, there was the institutionalisation of the subject with the creation of several centres destined to women's studies.<sup>100</sup> Since the beginning of the 1980s the idea of 'gender' started to entered the discussion. However, it has also been questioned whether, for several of these authors, gender has not represented just a fashionable term to replace women giving to these studies an aura of greater scientific respectability, since the use of gender was not always supported by a serious theoretical reflection about the challenges brought by this concept.<sup>101</sup>

## *Gender and Popular Culture*

Taking the *Cadernos de Pesquisa* as a sample of the field in general,<sup>102</sup> it is possible to affirm that the question of gender in popular culture has seldom been studied. Thus the attempt to analyse popular culture through a vast bulk of material drawn from several kind of sources as a counterpoint to the religious discourse is of particular importance.

In the field of gender studies, there is no study of advertisements, few about women on popular music<sup>103</sup> and on Brazilian cinema.<sup>104</sup> The small number of studies about the press for women have either focused intensively in just one magazine, which is analysed in depth;<sup>105</sup> or made comparisons between two of them.<sup>106</sup> Likewise the two studies about romantic novels already published have focused on just one author — M.Delly.<sup>107</sup> To my best knowledge, there is no study about religious prescriptive literature,<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Although we still do not have regular graduation courses fully destined to the subject, there is now an extensive list of MSc or PhD thesis covering many aspects of the theme.

<sup>101</sup> For such analysis about the use of 'gender' in some Brazilian works see HEILBORN, 1992a. However, it is also important to mention that, for several authors, the option to locate women's studies in the familial context represented an attempt of considering the so called women's role into a relational perspective, prior to the diffusion of the gender viewpoint.

<sup>102</sup> Besides the themes already mentioned, an evaluation of the articles on women's studies published in *Cadernos de Pesquisa*, shows that 60 % of the articles are concentrated in the themes of labour, family and sexual roles, whilst education, political participation and demography cater respectively for 13%, 14%, and 5% of the articles.

<sup>103</sup> BERLINCK, 1976; OLIVEN, 1987; MORAES, 1983.

<sup>104</sup> MUNERATO & OLIVEIRA 1980, 1982.

<sup>105</sup> For instance Maria Moraes analysed the magazine *Nova* (the Brazilian adaptation of *Cosmopolitan*) MORAES, 1979; Claudia Bassanezi did the same with the magazine *O Jornal das Moças*, focusing on the ideas around marriage. BASSANEZI, 1992. This author has an unpublished paper about sexuality through the analysis of the magazine *Ele e Ela* (which copies several features of the American magazine *Penthouse* and targets a male readership — erotic photos of feminine nude are its main attraction). Apart Dulcilia Buitoni (BUITONI, 1981, 1986) who provides an overview of the feminine stereotypes which prevailed on each decade (thus covering the 1950s); only BASSANEZI also deals with the 1950s. For the feminine press on the turn of the century see BICALHO, 1988, 1989. For the inter-war period see BESSE, 1983.

<sup>106</sup> Cynthia SARTI and Maria Moraes compared the magazines *Claudia*; *Nova* and *Capricho* in the 1970s; (SARTI & MORAES, 1980); Denise Alves paralleled the magazines *Nova* (regarded as a magazine for modern women) and *Ele e Ela* (the magazine for the modern men). (ALVES, 1985).

<sup>107</sup> See the pioneer study of PRADO, 1981; and CUNHA, 1993.

and this author was the first one to pay attention to the patterns for embroidery as a possible source of information about feminine imaginary. Few studies also catered for male imaginary through cartoons<sup>109</sup> and pornographic comics,<sup>110</sup> but they do not have gender as a focus. Moreover, there is no study linking all these themes for the 1950s period,<sup>111</sup>

Finally, studies of middle-class women are encompassed in the studies about middle-class families which have tended to focus more on familial relationships, than on feminist questions.

## *Sexuality*

Sexuality began to be studied in connection with the discussions of sex-roles and social identity,<sup>112</sup> focusing mainly on male homosexuality within a constructionist framework. Peter Fry's work on homosexuality was pivotal in setting the basis for this field in Brazil,<sup>113</sup> arguing that, as any other knowledge system, sexual representations are not born in a social vacuum. They are constitutive of social knowledge, coexist with conflicting political ideologies, with different religious cosmologies and ideologies about race, class and age, therefore, they can only be understood within the broad political context of their production. By focusing on representations rather than on experience, Fry intended to unveil the logic of such system, thus taxonomy and vocabulary play an important part in his study. This thesis is very much influenced by Peter Fry's work.

Michael Misse's pioneer study about the sexual categories of activity and passivity also deserves mention.<sup>114</sup> These are categories whose importance in the structure of Brazilian culture exceed the more immediate sexual domain. A recent study by an American anthropologist has also covered many of the issues linked to sex, which are object of this thesis. Richard Parker's book about Brazilian sexuality puts great emphasis on the popular language of sex. However, he largely fails to take into account that the dynamics of language include intonation, gestures and, particularly in Brazilian Portuguese the form of

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<sup>108</sup> It is of my knowledge that there is an unpublished paper about Flavio Gikovate's books by Roberto Yutaka Sagawa. Gikovate is a psychonanalist who published popular books about sexual education in the 1970s, and uses to write on feminine magazines about the same theme. Joao Mohana (the religious author of a manual of sexual education) is briefly analysed by Carlos Winckler (WINCKLER, 1983); and by Paulo Botas (BOTAS, 1981).

<sup>109</sup> There is just the pioneer study about *Amigo da Onça* by Marco Antonio Silva where he also examined the other cartoonists of the period. (SILVA, 1989).

<sup>110</sup> There are two books about Carlos Zéfiro, who is also mentioned by SILVA, 1989; D'ASSUNÇÃO, 1983; MARINHO, 1983.

<sup>111</sup> Besse links the analysis of newspapers and magazines and prescriptive literature for the interwar period.

<sup>112</sup> For instance, GASPARD, 1985, who studied a special type of prostitution carried on in night-clubs, is more interested in social identity than in gender issues. See HEILBORN, 1992a.

<sup>113</sup> FRY, 1982; FRY & MACRAE, 1983. It is out of the scope of this thesis to review the analysis of homosexuality.

<sup>114</sup> MISSE, 1979. See chapter 6 of this thesis.



the words used.<sup>115</sup> Thus one cannot understand the language of sex without thinking about the actors, their social class, group or age, plus the context and way these words are used, which the author fails to show. Although in the biographical data of each informant these variables are mentioned, the author does not make use of them, nor does he make clear, whether all of his informants (or who among them) would subscribe to the same information.

The other issues covered by this thesis have seldom been studied in Brazil: the influence of the Catholic religion has been analysed more extensively in relation to the popular sectors of society than to the middle class and very few deal with the gender issue. Thus these points have barely deserved more than articles in journals, or papers presented in seminars. It is worth to mention here Zaira Farias' paper about masculinity and femininity; Ivete Ribeiro's on the evolution of the Catholic doctrine about love and sex; and Paulo Botas's article about a religious manual of sex education.<sup>116</sup>

## *Domesticity*

Few studies on gender have focused on the housewife<sup>117</sup> and still less on the middle-class one.<sup>118</sup> In 1984, Marisa Correa emphasised that the virtual uniformity of class among gender researchers was paralleled by their reluctance to scrutinise the problems of women of their own social class, a circumstance that still seems to prevail.<sup>119</sup>

The political aspects of domestic life constitute the substratum of this thesis and of my previous work.<sup>120</sup> In an earlier study I examined the social construction of modern versions of 'the ladies of leisure,' captured by the Brazilian term *dondocas*, who administered the family social capital for the fulfilment of projects of social mobility, aimed at showing the tensions and competitiveness among groups of middle to upper classes in a Brazilian small town. It shows how women play the most important role in keeping up the boundaries of their group by discriminating who can or cannot be considered as 'equal' to them.<sup>121</sup> The analysis of feminine rituals – such as the crowning of the Virgin Mary and the balls – showed their 'pedagogical' aspects, not only for the construction of gender roles in

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<sup>115</sup> For instance, in the Brazilian portuguese, not only the use of the augmentative or diminutive forms of a word but also the choice of the suffixes used for change its form can connote different feelings ( affectivity, derision), thus being offensive or not.

<sup>116</sup> FARIAS 1984; RIBEIRO, 1986, 1989; BOTAS, 1981. See also AZZI, 1987 and PRANDI, 1975.

<sup>117</sup> See for instance SARTI, 1983. The majority of works about women in popular families had focused on other issues such as time-budget studies, woman headed households. It is out of the limits of this thesis to review these works.

<sup>118</sup> BRUSCHINI, 1983, 1990. OLIVEIRA SILVA, 1985, 1989.

<sup>119</sup> CORREA, 1984:31.

<sup>120</sup> OLIVEIRA SILVA, 1985. In this sense they are more indebted to the works of Bela Feldman-Bianco and Peter Fry who stress the political dimension of daily life concerns.

<sup>121</sup> Only when arriving in England in 1988, this author discovered Leonora Davidoff's '*The Best Circles*' (1972) in which the author had already studied the similar role played by domestic rituals in Victorian England.

general, but for the training of women in the necessary skills for administering social capital for the defence of their family and peer group.

Another study of the reader's club of the feminine supplement of a newspaper in the 1950s, not only disclosed the domestic universe of its readers but displayed empirical evidence that the discourse of mass-media in general was selectively read by them.<sup>122</sup> Although those housewives shared the general concerns of modern life, read the magazines, were targeted by the publicity of new products, they made their own version of these messages. For instance, building up an Olympia peopled by the most skilled members of the Club, rather than by Cafe Society, Hollywood or Radio Stars, or trying out home made versions of several new products considered fashionable or modern but rather expensive.

This thesis follows the same trend and it is possible to see it as a logical continuation of the previous works, which is to provide evidence of a larger political dimension of domesticity: its importance in the construction of the project for a modern industrialised nation.

This author has recently come across Susan Besse's study. As in this thesis, her sources were magazines and prescriptive literature for the study of middle-class woman from São Paulo in the inter-war period.<sup>123</sup> She used as counterpoint to these data, the analysis of the files about woman from the archive of a mental institution — under the supposition that among them were the women who did not follow the ideal model. On a different way, this thesis takes as counterpoint the male imaginary, envisaged through comics and cartoons where the norms which men were supposed to be the guardians are [apparently] subverted.

Besse's work was very important in the conclusion of the thesis for providing evidence of how specific to the 1950s were the issues analysed.

## *The Middle Classes*

As every anthropological study of the middle classes in Brazil this study has greatly benefited from Gilberto Velho's work, although gender, sexuality and domesticity per se have never been part of his academic interests.

His MSc dissertation '*A Utopia Urbana*,' in which he studied his lower-middle-class neighbours, is regarded as the starting point of a [now] well-settled tendency of Brazilian

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<sup>122</sup> OLIVEIRA SILVA, 1989.

<sup>123</sup> BESSE, 1983.

anthropology to study one's own urban milieu, or one's peer group.<sup>124</sup> However, it was in his PhD thesis – '*Nobres e Anjos: Um estudo de tóxicos e hierarquia.*'<sup>125</sup> – that he fixed on the group which would be the object of his work: 'the aristocracy of the middle segments' (or middle strata) described as — highly schooled; self considered as highly intellectual; cosmopolites, with sophisticated patterns of consumption; and chiefly, using psychoanalytical discourse and practice to structure their ethos and life-style.<sup>126</sup>

Velho's work is mainly concerned with individualism in contemporary society, thus adapting Dumont's and Simmel's work for the understanding of the specific Brazilian context. These studies probably represent the major and most visible trend of studies of the middle-classes in Brazil

Although this thesis has benefited in several ways from Velho's reflections, it concerns a totally different middle-class group. This author has been researching the life-style of ordinary housewives, who far from being bound to intellectual matters or psychoanalytical practice are circumscribed by the domestic domain, with family well-being as their major concern. This does not imply any assumption that middle-class housewives are part of a homogenous group.

## *Cultural Studies*

Finally as a whole, this research can be encompassed under the label of Brazilian cultural studies. And for it this reason, it has also had Da Matta's work as interlocutor. After his seminal book, *Carnival, Rogues and Heroes*, he proposed several starting points for understanding the Brazilian dilemma (('hierarchy and equality, holism and modern individualism; multiple ethics and contradictory maps for social navigation)<sup>127</sup>. These starting points encompassed a wide scale of topics. from carnival to football, novel characters, pornographic authors and some idiosyncratic rituals and words such as 'você

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<sup>124</sup> In this study Velho amazingly observed that people living next-to-door could, in several ways, be as aliens as the members of distant tribes: sharing the same geographical space and the same language do not necessarily imply sharing the same social codes and life-style. Conversely, foreign people who had the same patterns of schooling probably had read the same books, enjoyed the same films, had the same cultural references certainly were closer to him than these compatriots.

<sup>125</sup> His thesis concerns the different use of drugs as diacritical sign by two age-groups, both members of families of his own peer group: young adults of the intelligentsia of Rio de Janeiro, the nobles; and the surfer teenagers, the angels.

<sup>126</sup> Since then, he and his MSc and PhD students had been covering many aspects of the life-style of these social groups from the southern part of Rio de Janeiro.

<sup>127</sup> DA MATTA, 1993:12. Roberto Da Matta has provided models for an interpretation of Brazilian society, or as he preferred to say, for the Brazilian dilemma. Such dilemmas are ritualised in three events (carnival, military parades and religious processions) and synthesised in the opposition between the house (the private domain) and the street (the public world). To this opposition he later added a third pole – the supernatural world. For him what matters is not the mere opposition of these poles but the relationship established between them.

*sabe com quem está falando?*<sup>128</sup> 'sacanagem'<sup>129</sup> or 'saudade.'<sup>130</sup> His great merit was to propose a framework for understanding Brazil as 'an ongoing negotiation of two different and contradictory models' — such as democratic institutions operating not only through the norms but also through the ties of favour and personal relationships; Catholicism mixed with Afro Religions (not only through the *Umbanda* syncretism; but also from the Catholics who attend their rituals which are formally condemned).<sup>131</sup> The Brazilian dilemma would be resolved through idiosyncratic mediating categories such as *jeitinho*, *malandragem*, *sacanagem*.

DaMatta also argues that analysts tend to regard Brazil through a Western logical framework concluding that Brazil is a country which does not make sense,<sup>132</sup> or is a logical disaster. On the contrary, he says it has its own logic which is not dualistic but relational and based on intermediation.<sup>133</sup>

As David Hesse points out 'not everyone agrees with his framework and analyses, but [...] even those who disagree with him, will often admit that he has developed a profound and original critique of Brazilian society, and one which is profoundly Brazilian.'<sup>134</sup> His critics censure him for using the same models as an ingenious formula for analysing everything, and rightly argue that in a complex society and in a large country such Brazil, such uniformity cannot be defined. Historically or geographically, one can discover different

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<sup>128</sup> Literally do you know to whom are you talking to ?, this ritual is analysed in DA MATTA, 1991. For the other two, see MARINHO, 1983 and DA MATTA, 1993, respectively.

<sup>129</sup> According to the Aurélio Buarque de Holanda's Brazilian Dictionaries of Portuguese Language 'Sacana' is the action of a 'sacana' person. And 'sacana' could mean a scoundrel, a rogue, a slicker, a homosexual, a joker (who makes dirty jokes), or a shameless person. However, it has a more subtle and fluid meaning in accordance to the context where it is used. Thus, it is a word almost impossible to be translated. See chapter 5 of this thesis. See also DA MATTA, 1983; PARKER, 1991.

<sup>130</sup> 'According to the Aurélio Buarque de Holanda's Brazilian Dictionaries of Portuguese Language, *Saudade* is a nostalgic, yet gentle, remembrance of distant or dead persons or places along with the desire to see or hold them again. It is common sense that it is also a Portuguese word impossible to be translated. See DA MATTA 1993.

<sup>131</sup> A good example is provided by the ritual of throwing into the sea white flowers and gifts (parfums, ribbons, champagne, mirrors, jewelry) to *Yemanjá* the afro goddess of the waters — on the 31st of December. At each year, the beaches are increasingly becoming more full of people — faithful in its strict sense, or not — who dress in white clothes to pay their pledges to her.

<sup>132</sup> In the 1950s Peter Kelleman, a Hungarian migrant wrote a funny book named *Brasil para os Brasileiros (Brazil to the Brazilian [understanding], I believe that it was the first time someone tried to write about *jeitinho*. He starts his book by saying that a beetle is an insect that challenge aerodynamic laws — it should not fly but it does. He uses it as a metaphor to explain why Brazil had not to function at all, but it does. Later he was arrested because he invented a kind of lottery which was revealed to be a farse. The media made ironies saying that he had not succeeded in applying *jeitinho* for his own good; and that one had to be suspicious about such keen interest in the splits of legal system, as he had.*

<sup>133</sup> Roberto Da Matta has provided models for an interpretation of Brazilian society, or as he preferred to say, for the Brazilian dilemma. Such dilemmas are ritualised in three events (carnival, military parades and religious processions) and synthesised in the opposition between the house (the private domain) and the street (the public world). To this opposition he later added a third pole – the supernatural world. For him what matters is not the mere opposition of these poles but the relationship established between them.

<sup>134</sup> HESS, 1995:4.

signification in the most ordinary things, which everyone is supposed to know and whose meaning everyone is supposed to understand.

His models are also somewhat static, and even taking them as metaphors and not as descriptions of reality, they leave us with an uneasiness which arises from a gap between these levels. A metaphor has its starting point in the reality, although it surpasses it. Thus, a metaphor whose starting point does not match one's experience, lacks explicative power.<sup>135</sup> That is why I can venture, based in my own experience as teacher, that the young generation of today hardly recognises the carnival, and the military parade described by DaMatta.

Another issue for unease is the political aspect of his interpretation. One could hardly disagree that for the majority these practices of mediation, such as *jeitinho*, *maladragem*, have provided an original way to survive in a society that has a double ethic and is profoundly unjust. However those who want to contest this inequitable situation can not agree his apparent celebration of this sort of practice for its originality and for being Brazilian — a highly conservative stance.<sup>136</sup>

His later work has been also criticised for being subjective.<sup>137</sup> It offers interpretations of Brazil based more on his own [Brazilian] experience than in any field work. From them, one can learn as much about Da Matta as about Brazil, that is, as much about a person of his generation and social background, as about Brazil in the 1950s and early 1960s.<sup>138</sup> This is another point to make his work an important reference for this work, although not always agreeing with his interpretation when it did not match this author's own.

Notwithstanding these points, this thesis follows his trend in taking into account ambiguities, subversion of the rules, relational situations, mediating practices, and thinking about Brazil not as an 'either-or' country but as 'a both-and' one.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> This is the case of his interpretation about the word *sacanagem*, what made me wonder whether gender did not play a role in these slightly different interpretations.

<sup>136</sup> I would agree that a project to surpass those social iniquities would have to take them in account, as possible original triggers for social and political transformations.

<sup>137</sup> In his preface to his last book he anticipated possible criticism of subjectivism by stating that the book was *Just essays. Less than trials of finalised or scientific demonstration of cultural or sociological experiments, one will read a set of [intellectual] glimpses, perspectives, frames, which amalgamated to my fantasy and permeated by my anthropological imagination, literally essays to enlighten what Brazil is as a nation, as a life style and as society*. DA MATTA, *ibid.* My emphasis.

<sup>138</sup> His model of Brazil seems to be firmly anchored in these decades, which correspond to his youth.

<sup>139</sup> HESS, *ibid.*

## *A Brief Account of the Theoretical Framework*

### *Discourse and Power*

Feminists have widely acknowledged the heuristic value of Foucault's theories of power, sexuality and the subject, mainly because of his de-constructionist method. On a theoretical or philosophical level, the Foucauldian approach has provided a useful starting point for the feminist analysis of these issues. However, its limitations have also been pointed out, and seen as derived from his androcentric bias or from the gendered aspects of his theories, which makes his theories politically unsuitable for feminist purposes. However Caroline Ramazanoglu<sup>140</sup> also pointed out that one would not dare to leave out Foucault in a study about discourse, and this thesis endorses her argument.

Notwithstanding feminist critiques which will be summarised below, the research has benefited from Foucault's theories, mainly because it deals with bibliographic sources, with the messages directed to a feminine readership, and not with the actual action of women in that period, in which case his theory would not provide an efficient theoretical framework to support its analysis.

It is the purpose of this brief account to disclose the clues which made possible the analysis carried on in the following chapters. The study aims to show the broader context of the multiple messages directed to women in the Brazilian 1950s, which provided directories of behaviour and practices in contradiction. The Foucauldian approach allows us to perceive how regimes and practices of disciplinary control which are in a macro level impact on the self, and how they change over time.

From this theoretical new point was possible to perceive the disciplinary content of the religious manual<sup>141</sup> and the disciplinarian ambience of convents – the image of the world as a panopticum, the construction of a doctrine which led to the embodiment of ideas of sin and guilt (one sins by words, thoughts, acts and intentions) which constrains the faithful to detail these 'sins' to the priest (how many times, how, alone/together; freely sought or no); a doctrine which over emphasised 'the sins of the flesh' stressing human imperfection that bind humankind to sin in spite of God's love who destined them to sanctity. The consequence was an ambience saturated with scruples and guilt.

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<sup>140</sup> RAMAZANOGLU, 1993

<sup>141</sup> This author is aware that when discourses are confronted with the actual practice – which is totally out of the scope of this thesis – the efficacy of the messages is mitigated, different forms of reading them, confronting with one's own experiences are made possible, and also different ways of dealing with rules are lived

It is also the Foucauldian approach that helps us to analyse the discourse of publicity as aiming to create woman's body as an 'ornamental surface'<sup>142</sup> to be treated, pampered, displayed in accordance to a pattern of beauty dictated by Hollywood, magazines and publicity. It also enabled us to perceive that the ideal beautiful body was only accomplished if previously perceived as fragmented – each part in need of different kinds of care. Moreover, such perception was constitutive of the acknowledgement of hygiene and beauty by advertising messages – which supported the formation of new patterns of consumption.

Moreover, it is also Foucault's theory of power which enables us to perceive that the construction of femininity, which subsumed the learning of submission, was also interwoven by the learning of resistance – quite explicitly put by woman authors of religious manuals.

This thesis benefited from Foucault's analysis because it deals not with personal experience of the process, but with a more general and abstract level. This author is quite aware of the limitations of the Foucauldian approach for the specificity of gender experiences and feminist struggles against oppression, as has been denounced by several feminist authors.

On a political level the Foucauldian approach is more thoroughly criticised, and considered unhelpful, either for illuminating feminist political struggles or understanding women's actual experiences of oppression. These critiques focus mainly on three points: a) the generalisation of his assumptions. He does not discriminate between man's and woman's different and specific insertion in society. That is – "it erases women's specific experience with power"<sup>143</sup> or does not take into account "the disciplinary practices that engender the docile bodies of women, more docile than the bodies of men."<sup>144</sup> b) his conception of power as a capillary system pervading social relationships, and the assumption that power is not possessed but exercised, challenge the key feminist points of patriarchy, male power and the subordinate condition of women; c) his theories of the body (and sexuality) being constituted through multiple discourses, obscures the concrete relationship women (and men) have with their own bodies.

Judith Butler questions these feminist assumptions challenging the cross-cultural 'identity of woman'<sup>145</sup> and the notion that women's oppression has some singular form discernible in the universal or hegemonic structure of patriarchy or masculine domination.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>142</sup> BARTKY, quoted by DEVEAUX, 1994.

<sup>143</sup> DEVEAUX, 1994:224.

<sup>144</sup> BARTKY, 1988: 65. quoted in DEVEAUX, *ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> DEVEAUX, 1994:

<sup>146</sup> BUTLER, 1990 : 3.

She claims that oppression is not limited to “phalocentric relationships” but also operates in relation to race, class, heterosexuality and age. Therefore, “imperializing gestures” cannot be reduced to an “axis of sexual differences” nor can the existence of “any other candidate for the position of primary condition of oppression be claimed.”<sup>147</sup> According to Butler this kind of theoretical universality masks the colonising gesture behind these efforts to appropriate non-western cultures to support ‘highly Western notions of oppression. In such construction of a ‘Third World’ or ‘Orient’ gender oppression is subtly explained as symptomatic of an essential non-western barbarism.<sup>148</sup>

Judith Butler relies on Foucault for her analysis of the construction of gender and the identity of sexual minorities. Monique Deveaux in her turn, points out the weakness of Butler’s assumptions in supporting the political struggles of sexual minorities, and her ambivalence in tackling the crucial issue derived from her theoretical model.<sup>149</sup>

Caroline Ramazanoglu raises a crucial problem in relation to the feminist use of the Foucauldian approach. She argues that feminists cannot simply borrow his terminology since they come from different theoretical axioms. However, she adds, feminists cannot afford to ignore him because his criticisms and the challenges posed by his theories helps to illuminate existing problems in feminism.<sup>150</sup>

A further important account for the analysis of discourse and power is provided by Pierre Bourdieu. He supports the framework for the understanding of the symbolic level of domination by which people are ruled and embodied structures, of which they are not even aware. Contrary to Foucault he does not give an historical account, and although they could be taken as in opposition, together they provide means to refine the analysis about discourse and power.

Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus and embodiment also provide a framework for the theoretical study of social class beyond the Marxist viewpoint,<sup>151</sup> by stressing the symbolic system which transforms the social space into a space of distinctions: that is of different life-styles, expressed in different ethos and different patterns of taste. These concepts provided the background to examine the data analysed in this work.

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<sup>147</sup> BUTLER, *ibid.*: 13/14.

<sup>148</sup> BUTLER, *ibid.*: 3.

<sup>149</sup> DEVEAUX, *ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> RAMAZANOGLU, 1993

<sup>151</sup> Bourdieu states that he breaks with the idea of a theoretical class constructed by scientists being taken for the real class — the effectively mobilized group; breaks with the reduction to the economic field the social space which is multidimensional; breaks with the idea of the relations of economic production being established as co-ordinates for social position at the expenses of the symbolic ones.



## *Gender and Popular Culture*

The study of gender in popular culture in this thesis has Barthes's theories of semiotics<sup>152</sup> as its starting point. His seminal book *Mythologies* had taught us how images construct meanings that are 'specific for particular societies, classes, periods of history, not God-given, nor immutable.'<sup>153</sup>

As Williamson explains, when analysing images, changing the conceptual pair 'form and content' by 'signifiers and signified' is not a mere updating of terms. 'Form' conveys the idea of immateriality, it is invisible; 'a scaffolding to be filled out by content, which is seen as substantial' in contrast 'signifiers' are things while signified are ideas. Although the first pair can be used individually; signifier and signified are inseparable and both together constitute the *sign*, one is not anterior or exterior to the other, but both intrinsically bound together. Williamson explains:

*'Therefore, [the] use of these words has in itself a very particular significance; it emphasises both the materiality and the meaning of the signifier in any communication.'*<sup>154</sup>

Although Barthes' theories provide a fundamental tool for the analysis of advertisements in general, Judith Williamson, Janice Winship and Erving Goffman among others, have posed different questions in relation to gender in publicity. These questions go further than the truth/untruth of the message they explicitly transmit, or the stereotypes they display.<sup>155</sup> This is a major theme for the women's movement, since it is assumed that advertising 'deploy images of women, construct and reaffirm stereotyped and limiting views of women's lives and capabilities.'<sup>156</sup> Several authors have pointed out the limitations of such analyses, because 'they bypass the ideology of the way in which ads work,'<sup>157</sup> besides there is a tendency to examine *what* is represented at the expense of *how* it is done, or *why* these images and not others are displayed.<sup>158</sup> For Erving Goffman rather than a supposed falsehood, there is an exaggeration of social life:

*advertisers conventionalise our conventions, stylise what is already a stylisation, make frivolous use of what is already something considerably cut off from contextual controls. Their hype is hyper-ritualisation.*<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>152</sup>BARTHES, 1972, 1974.

<sup>153</sup> WILLIAMSON, 1990 (Preface to the fourth edition).

<sup>154</sup>WILLIAMSON, *ibid.*: 18.

<sup>155</sup> For a theoretical study about advertisements in general see WILLIAMSON, 1978. For gender in advertisements see GOFFMAN, 1979; WINSHIP, 1981; BETTERTON, 1987; POLLOCK, 1987; COWARD, 1987; BARTHES, 1972.

<sup>156</sup> BETERTON, 1987: 19.

<sup>157</sup> WILLIAMSON, 1984: 175. See also POLLOCK, 1987.

<sup>158</sup> WINSHIP, 1981:26.

<sup>159</sup> GOFFMAN, 1979: 84.

Therefore, as Janice Winship points out, his position 'seems to render any discussion of changing the representations in ads useless: where transformations should occur [...] is in the social situations from which ads draw their convention.'<sup>160</sup> It does not mean that advertisements mirror 'reality,' rather they provide an ideal view of it, built up with the 'bricks' of social customs. Thus, advertisements do not simply reflect people as they are, rather as they prefer to be.

Winship calls the attention to the three minimal terms for any analysis of images – ideology, representation and mode of address. She agrees with Williamson that representation is a process of signification in which we are 'snared as active receivers,' and that this process constructs subject positions for us. However

*a) we can only understand this positioning if it connects with positions we already know about; b) that that knowledge which is partly dependent on our social position, effects our understanding of what is 'in' 'the discourse; it effects how [...] we are complicit with the subject positions constructed there.*<sup>161</sup>

For Williamson, ideology is the meaning made *necessary* by the conditions of society while helping to *perpetuate* those conditions.<sup>162</sup> And finally, for Winship, advertisements always address a 'you' which is constructed as a gendered (and classed) and a wholly white you.<sup>163</sup> If it is questionable whether Winship's statement is still true, it aptly describes Brazilian situation in the 1950s. Then advertisements targeted an adult, white, heterosexual, middle-class public. Although several new magazines were directed to children and teenagers, they were not regarded as a different consumer public yet. Children/teenagers and the elderly were targeted through the adult active part of the family who bought goods for them.<sup>164</sup> However, either for being imported as were the goods they advertised, or for aptly catching themes in discussion, advertisements did not merely picture the Brazilian 'reality' in the 1950s. We can hypothesise that beyond introducing new goods, they performed a pedagogical modernising role: by displaying, thus shaping a new feminine body; for displaying new moral patterns (as the emphasis in feminine seduction); and new patterns of familial relationship.<sup>165</sup>

Previous readings of Edgard Morin's and Jean Baudrillard's work provided the general background to mass media and the role played by objects in modern society.

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<sup>160</sup> WINSHIP, 1981: 27. My emphasis.

<sup>161</sup> WINSHIP, *ibid.*: 28.

<sup>162</sup> WILLIAMSON, 1984: 13. A review about ideology, and its various conceptions is out of the limits of this thesis.

<sup>163</sup> WINSHIP, *ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> See for instance advertisements of spring mattress in chapter 8

<sup>165</sup> Marchand calls attention to the emphasis in warm scenes of mothers sharing books, picnics with their children. In Brazil, mothers are spectators of fathers playing with children – that is the new modern fatherhood. (MARCHAND, 1985).

Although punctually quoted in this thesis, they provided several insights for the understanding of the data. It is important to notice that it is the earlier Baudrillard works about consumption that are being referred here, such as '*System of Objects*' and '*For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign*.'

## *The Sources*

The research drew on a wide variety of bibliographic sources which will be briefly described here.

### *Religious Manuals*

The Catholic literature for girls has to be analysed in the context of the doctrinaire tendencies of the Catholic Church in Brazil, because this informed the world view of the authors.<sup>166</sup> At the beginning of the century, in a short period of thirty years, the Catholic Church brought to Brazil more than 150 male and female religious congregations and orders,<sup>167</sup> each one with its own particular vocation, tradition and goal. They had different origins and certainly transposed to Brazil their cultural conditioning,<sup>168</sup> and the influence of local problems which affected the Church in their countries.<sup>169</sup> That is why there was not a single monolithic Catholic view in Brazil about morality and religion.

The classification of the religious prescriptive literature for girls defies the dichotomy of traditional versus modern. Rather, their authors can be classified on a scale of moralism, where some had stronger moralist views than others. However, the ideology about women and family was common ground shared both by the more 'progressive' and the 'traditionalists.'

From several issues covered in the prescriptive literature, attention will be confined to norms or ideological principles that shape, constrain or inform women's behaviour in general.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> A first indicator is the publisher. There were several religious publishers in Brazil and their tendencies, more conservative or 'modern', were well known.

<sup>167</sup> BEOZZO,1984a.

<sup>168</sup> For instance southern France, Spain Italy and Portugal are part of the area where the so called 'honour and shame complex' have been analysed.

<sup>169</sup> For instance the opposition between State and Church in France; the survival of traces of Jansenism in French popular piety, in spite of strong condemnation by the Church.

<sup>170</sup> Those issues directly linked to spirituality or concerning only Catholic doctrine in its religious aspects will not be considered in this thesis.

## *Romantic Books for Girls*

The major influence in the traditional education for girls in Brazil came from France – not only through the French convents usually destined for élite and middle-class girls, but also through children's and teenagers' literature, which was read in the original by upper-class girls.

First they read the *Coleção Menina e Moça*, the translation of the French '*La Bibliothèque de Suzette*' and later the girls were introduced to the universe of romantic novels. There were three collections of books – the '*Biblioteca das Moças*,' which included French, English and North American authors from the turn or the first decades of the century; the French books of the '*Blue Collection*' and the new *Pink Collection* of North American authors and modern plots. Data are taken chiefly from the books of the *Biblioteca das Moças*, whose authors will be analysed, showing their different styles.

## *General Magazines*

*O Cruzeiro* was overwhelmingly the most important magazine in the 1950s.<sup>171</sup> It inaugurated in Brazil a new conception of the press, characterised by impressive capital and a plurality of associations with the production and consumer markets. The 'creation of facts' was an important strategy for the launching of cultural, civic or moral crusades which seduced the consumers, establishing a favourable image for the products which were behind them.<sup>172</sup> It was classified as a magazine for the whole family in view of the diversity of issues it covered from comments about foreign politics to movies and the more specific themes for women – sections about cooking, beauty, fashion, agony column and serialised novels.

The circulation of the magazine reached 550 000 a week, the highest in Latin North America being the first to circulate all over the country. It remained in the leading position until the 1960s, when the owner of the *Diários Associados* died, marking the end of his 'press empire.'<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>171</sup> The weekly magazine *O Cruzeiro* was created in 1928, later it was bought by the group '*Diários Associados*', which owned newspapers and radio stations in several states. The major editorial changes started in 1943 with the larger use of photographs, new sections enlarging very much its circulation. The same group also edited *A Cigarra* which had been created in the second decade of the century as a literary magazine. In 1948 **the magazine started to issue the '*Suplemento Feminino*'** printed in colour with the standard feminine issues as beauty, fashion, home decoration. The principal newspaper of the *Diários Associados* also published a feminine supplement, which was dominated by a reader's club, from 1952 onwards. Later, local branches of the same club were also created by the local newspapers of that group. This club was analysed in OLIVEIRA SILVA, 1989.

<sup>172</sup> According to Marcos Antonio da Silva, it jumped from 11000 issues a week in 1940 to 720 000 in 1954. SILVA, 1989:

<sup>173</sup> In the 1950s, the group of the *Diários Associados* encompassed newspapers and radio stations in almost every state; magazines, comics and the most popular TV station in Rio de Janeiro. Its influence in the 1950s is analogous to the political and cultural influence of TV Globo nowadays. In 1954 another publisher house launched *Manchete*

## *Women's Magazines*

This decade in Brazil was marked by the emergence of many specialised modern magazines, including several for young woman. In 1947 a new magazine *Grande Hotel* introduced serialised romantic novels in cartoons, using imported material from Italy, following the international tendency towards the sentimentalization of woman's magazines.<sup>174</sup> From 1951 drawings were substituted by photos and *Capricho* – created in 1952 introduced the successful innovation of a whole 'photo-novel' in each issue. *Capricho* – labelled 'the magazine for the modern woman' can be considered the starting point for the modern feminine press in Brazil – strongly based in North America publishing, a formula copied by the ensuing ones.<sup>175</sup> They included a bit of fashion, cooking, an agony column, at least one romantic short story besides the photo-novel, its leading attraction. As Marjorie Ferguson pointed out, these magazines

*"more than women and womanly things, they are about femininity itself – as a state, a condition, a craft, and an art form which comprise a set of practices and beliefs. [...] Thus] everyone born a female is a candidate for their services and sacraments. [...] The fact that they exist at all makes a statement about the position of women in society as one which requires separate consideration and distinctive treatment."*<sup>176</sup>

In fact they consecrate the implicit idea that woman are

*at best unconfident, and at worst incompetent, "needs" or "wants" to be instructed, rehearsed or brought up to date on the arts and skills of femininity, while a more powerful and confident male sex already "knows" everything there is to know about the business of being masculine."*<sup>177</sup>

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repeating the same scheme of *O Cruzeiro*, with the same feminine issues, only emphasising photographs more than texts. They also substituted the serial novels by chronicles about facts of daily life, wrote by well known male writers.

<sup>174</sup>Only in 1959 did the feminine press change its 'sentimental' accent towards information about 'home care-care' following an international tendency to stress the 'modern consumer housewife'. The first of these magazines was *Manequim* specialising in patterns for home sewing. However, *Claudia* – the first monthly magazine for the 'modern housewife' was only published in 1961. On the one hand it was a directory for consumerism, on the other hand, for the first time in Brazil, the woman's press opened space for serious debate of feminist issues. From 1963, the journalist Carmem da Silva questioned all the presupposed principles which informed the feminine role, until her death in 1985. Nevertheless, in my opinion, the magazine had a kind of 'schizophrenic' result since what she preached on the one hand, was denied on the other, through editorials and publicity. For the analysis of *Claudia*, see MORAES, 1979; SARTI & MORAES, 1980.

<sup>175</sup> Such as *Ilusão*, *Noturno*, *Cinderela*, *Sétimo Céu*, *Você*, *Idílio* (*Illusion*, *Nocturne*, *Cinderella*, *The Seventh Heaven*, *You*, *Idyll*) Their titles with strong sentimental connotation left no doubt that romantic love was their most important issue.

<sup>176</sup> FERGUSON, 1983:1.

<sup>177</sup>FERGUSON, *ibid.*:2. As Janice Winship remarks this is evident in the shelves of any local news shop. There is always one rack marked 'woman's world' with women's magazines, and others called 'leisure', 'hobbies,' where crochet, cooking and sewing magazines are never included. For common sense, those racks are about 'the men's world', which is never actually labelled separately [ sometimes, only erotic magazines, my comment]. Actually the men's world includes everything but family life and the domestic domain. WINSHIP, 1987:6.

Magazines specialising in radio or cinema issues were also – very popular then – and although directed to a general readership, had women as the majority of their readers. ‘*Revista do Radio*’ created in the 1940s and directed to a lower-class readership helped to construct a minor Brazilian version of the Hollywoodian Olympus. It was a low-priced weekly magazine, made of cheap paper, badly printed and with an abundance of photographs about the daily life of the popular radio stars – whose majority had likewise a poor origin. Their life-stories were widely known, showing how talent and chance helped to transform them into famous people. The *Revista do Radio* pictured an environment and a life style probably out of the reach of its readership, selling the fantasy of modern affluence to them. It was no coincidence that radio programs designed to give a chance to new talents – the ‘*programas de calouros*’ – became very popular and in a way ‘democratised’ the chances of that fantasy being concretised.

In the 1953, a glossy magazine about cinema – the ‘*Cinelândia*’ – was created for a readership of greater economic means, making the names of several new actors known in Brazil, less by the films that they had played in than by the reports and gossip in that magazine.

### *Patterns for Handicrafts.*

Embroidered kitchen sets were very common in the 1950s. Their main element were the seven tea-towels supposedly destined one to each day of the week, which made them known as ‘*jogos de panos de pratos*’ – tea-towel sets. Usually the set included a bag for bread, another for the meat-chopping-board; a towel for hanging on the wall in front of the stove, another for the table, possibly some for lining the shelves. Women very much favoured those which developed the same theme in all the articles. The principal source for these sets was the magazine *O Jornal das Moças*. They were collected either to be embroidered or to be swapped with friends.<sup>178</sup>

These patterns could be regarded as a summary of domestic themes more properly a kind of timetable of domestic tasks performed by different characters playing the part of housewife.<sup>179</sup> As they developed the same theme through several patterns, they can be analysed as a kind of linear narrative, articulated as a fable in a metaphorical language, usually having humanised animals or plants as their characters. Contrary to the fables these animals are not used as symbols (such as the lion representing power or the fox expressing cunning). They were chosen for their easily identifiable physical characteristics: giraffes,

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<sup>178</sup> See also OLIVEIRA SILVA, 1989.

<sup>179</sup> Very few had the masculine role as its central theme.

rabbits, kangaroos or elephants.<sup>180</sup> As they were published in a serialised form, a pattern for a towel each week, the analogy with popular narrative is reinforced.

Although the theme of housework greatly outweighed others, *O Jornal das Moças* also published sets around other themes, such as the customs of exotic places – the Eskimos, the Pacific South Islands, introduced by two or three phrases explaining the meaning of the scenes – figures of fairy tales, such as Red Riding Hood, and even D. Quixote.

The popularity of these samples greatly increased in the 1950s: whilst in the 1940s, the weekly magazine *O Jornal das Moças* published no more than two sets of these patterns each year, in the 1950s they did not stop publishing them – as soon as they finished a set, they immediately started another one. Gradually they fell out of fashion for upper segments of middle classes. From the 1960s on, instead of embroidery they started to be painted and the first ones almost disappeared. Recently the embroidered ones started to be considered fashionable again as part of a wave of nostalgia.

## *The Outline of the Thesis*

First this thesis draws the context of Brazilian society in the 1950s: the economic and political changes at the end of the Second World War, from which derived the project of building up Brazil as a modern progressive country. Magazines of the period displays the trends of such construction which mixed nationalist ideals and mirror alignment to the USAmerican interests and the efforts to emulate the culturally up-to-date expressions of the 'First world.' The Catholic Church started to modernise its action so that it could not escape the general tendencies of society. Finally it demonstrate the ambiguous position of Rio de Janeiro and Copacabana which epitomised both the dreams of being modern and its evils.

The following chapter deals with the foundations of the construction of femininity in Brazilian middle class terms discussing the gendered nature of Catholic doctrine and examining the cultural complex of honour and shame which informed the 'traditional' position of women in society. The description of the process of courtship (*'namoro'*) unveil the ways by which such ideologies were embodied and lived in daily life.

Chapter Three analyses the Catholic apparatus by which the traditional feminine role was implemented through the convent schools and laic movements of the Church. It also displays the influence of modernist sectors of the church in building up a new feminine ethos.

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<sup>180</sup> They will be analysed in chapter 9.

Chapter Four analyses the religious preaching about feminine nature, domesticity and sexuality through the prescriptive literature of the period. The same ideas are replicated in the romantic novels very popular at the period, which will be object of analysis in Chapter Five. An examination of the books published in the '*Biblioteca das Moças*, unveils the ways by which such naive literature tantalised the girls' sexual fantasies in a context of considerable prudery.

It is not possible to understand the construction of a feminine imaginary without its counterpoint in male imaginary in relation to the feminine role. In a machista context while man has the dominant role, he is also dependent on woman since his reputation depends on his honourable behaviour. Expectations about his role of breadwinner and his sexual performance build up his own model of masculinity. Chapter Six analyses pornographic comics destined to a male readership, and the work of male cartoonists, displaying how laughter provided a safe way of alleviating social pressures over gender roles without representing a corrosive element for a radical change.

Images of woman in popular culture were frequently opposed to traditional representations which centred on modesty and passivity, and which either sanctified sexuality (in wedlock), or saw it as transgressive (when outside the sphere of family). Chapters Six and Seven show how a new genre of advertisements, however, heightened sexual allure as the necessary element of femininity, contributing to the 'domestication of seduction.'

The counterpart of this seductive woman, was the new efficient housewife and mother: the target consumer of domestic appliances. Although at first glance it seems that the imagery of consumption embodied the old dichotomy between the good asexual woman/mother/Mary/ and the bad/sexy /Eve/source of illicit pleasures, I will argue that both are facets of the same ambiguous figure, as analysed on Chapters Eight and Nine.

These models and messages divulged by various means were pivotal for establishing parameters for the self-evaluation of middle-class women and for the construction of new paradigms for Brazilian society. A society which was trying to adjust its own image to that of a new world where progress, modernisation and democracy were seen as global ideals.



## Chapter 1

# *The 1950s: The Making Of The Brazilian Dream*

## *The Historical Background of the Social Imaginary*

Brazil emerged from the Second World War suffused with ideas of modernisation, progress and democracy. In spite of her minor role backing the Allies the population vicariously shared the sense of triumph and confidence which came with the end of the war. Incompatible with the popular support for the ideal of democracy the dictatorship which had lasted fifteen years soon reached its end, elections were called and a new constitution proclaimed. At the same time there was a strong belief that a new country would be born from these seeds of freedom with the support of the United States. Brazil was still a young nation, with a great potential for development. Rio de Janeiro, particularly *Copacabana*, provided the rest of the country with a foretaste of what a modern way of life would be like.

However, Brazil oscillated between contradictory tendencies: on the one hand an increasing economic nationalism and on the other a mirror alignment with the United States in international political matters, even when the interests of the 'poor countries' (Brazil included) were under consideration. The middle classes vacillated between the desire to emulate the 'American Way of Life' and the fear of importing foreign moral values. Intellectuals wanted to make their work as sophisticated as that of the best of America and Europe, whilst the majority continued to favour popular productions rooted in the circus, soap operas and radio. Nevertheless, the feeling that a new modern country was in the making permeated daily life, and the general public was eager to reap the benefits.

Juscelino Kubitschek's government synthesised that feeling and the new capital in Brasilia epitomised the sense of the making of the Brazilian dream. However, the making contrasted with the living of that dream which, by the end of the decade, came to resemble a nightmare.

## *US Policy Towards Latin America*

The Second World War strengthened diplomatic, military and economic ties with the United States. The aim of the latter was to increase its power in the continent and thus neutralise European and Asian influence. Thus, the 1950s were a period of tension between an emergent political and economic nationalism and an economic policy anchored in foreign capital investments.

In the bipolar world which then existed any national opposition against the US was regarded as an expression of support for the Soviet Union. Nationalism was therefore perceived by US policy makers (and their supporters) as an instrument of international Communism for Soviet expansionism in Latin America and was regarded as a threat to both US and Latin American continental security.

During the 1940s the US developed several programmes in the quest to strengthen its influence in Latin America. There was widespread interference in the press and radio with support for reports which favoured US interests; aid programmes also invested in rural education, public health and agricultural matters.<sup>1</sup> The US programme for economic co-operation in Latin America development did not contemplate aid for the setting up of basic or heavy industries;<sup>2</sup> but those supplying consumer goods.<sup>3</sup> US political interest was to preserve Latin America as an efficient producer of raw materials and as a large market for US commodities. This policy followed three principles: the political struggle against economic protectionism; support for the free market; and equal treatment for national and foreign capital.

North American foreign policy towards Latin America, Brazil included, had the main purpose of guarantee the support for the cold War. For the public in general it meant selling the dream of the American Way of Life as expressed in Hollywood, cinema magazines, new consumer goods, the *Reader's Digest* and the *Institutos Brasil-Estados Unidos*, which aimed to disseminate the language, arts and literature of the United States:<sup>4</sup>

*The world knew the United States of America by means of the cinema [...] A great dream story where the cowboy<sup>5</sup>, the gentleman, the honest citizen<sup>6</sup>,*

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<sup>1</sup> In this context was created the UREMG (Rural University of the Minas Gerais State later Universidade Federal de Viçosa) and in it the first course of Home Economics. It counted with wide participation of American lecturers, settling the basis of a 'scientific' agriculture with large use of fertilisers, pesticides, machines- thus widening the consume of products sold by great American industries.

<sup>2</sup> One exception was the loan granted under the terms of an agreement concluded during the Second World War with the Brazilian government for the construction of a steel plant in the 1940s.

<sup>3</sup> See MOURA, 1988 and 1991.

<sup>4</sup> For this process of Americanisation see MOURA, 1988.

<sup>5</sup> George Steven's *Shane* [*Os Brutos Tambem Amam*]; John Ford's mythical western and chiefly the mythical American Cavalry in his trilogy: *Fort Apache* [*Sangue de Herois*]; *Rio Grande* [*Rio Bravo*] and *She Wore a Yellow Ribbon* [*Legião Invencível*], provide good examples. (Between brackets are the titles they had in Brazil.)

*the poor heroine always defeat the Indian, the bandit, the dishonest and the rich girl. Hollywood creates that America where good destroyed evil, love always triumphed in the end and ordinary people could dream about the marvels of an extraordinary life.*<sup>7</sup>

Using this formula, the mass media divided the world between good and bad. The myth of the honesty, heroism and generosity of the American man<sup>8</sup> and the excellence of America as a country pervaded mass culture, generating subtle compliance. The United States also helped to establish modern printing industries in Brazil, thus a large variety of newspapers and magazines started to circulate among the middle and upper classes. Colourful magazines saturated with gossip presented photographs of the houses and the extraordinary life of the Hollywood Stars, who were either asking for divorce or marrying again – a scandal for the conservative Catholic middle classes of Brazil.<sup>9</sup> Besides cinema and magazines there was American music, much more popular among middle class youth than Brazilian. Maria Thereza Lacerda says that she will never forget “the dances where I cuddled *My Foolish Heart* waiting for *The Man I Love* trying to look *Sweet and Lovely*.”<sup>10</sup> Puns using names of films and popular music were a common play among adolescents. Brazilian teenagers used to speak about their feelings of love through the lyrics of fox-trots and blues, before sharing the anger of youth through 'rock 'n' roll.<sup>11</sup> They commonly collected their favourite lyrics published by magazines such as *Cinelândia*, *Carioca*, *Cinderela*.

American lifestyles were regarded with suspicion by the more conservative. They regretted the substitution of French supremacy by American values. Latin culture, identified with the Roman Catholic ethic equalled virtue; Anglo-Saxon (or North American) culture identified with Protestantism, was regarded as disruptive and dangerous. The revolt against authority at the root of Protestantism, made it synonymous with evil and vice. Soares D'Azevedo, an author of normative books for girls stated:

*The fifth idolatry of modern times is called freedom.*<sup>12</sup> *From the liberty of free examination [of the Bible] in the Protestant Reformation, we went to the free*

<sup>6</sup> As Frank Capra's *Mr Deeds Goes to Tow* [O Galante Mr.Deeds]; *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* [A Mulher Faz o Homem]; *You Can't Take It With You* [Do Mundo Nada Se Leva]. *Mrs Minniver* [Rosa da Esperança].

<sup>7</sup> *Nosso Século* v 3: 323. These themes of mass culture spread by American cinema, novels and comics were also analysed by MORIN, 1969.

<sup>8</sup> See, for instance the role played by Montgomery Clift as the American soldier in Fred Zinnerman's *The Search* [A Tormenta].

<sup>9</sup> I am mainly referring to a magazine called '*Cinelândia*'.

<sup>10</sup> LACERDA, 1990:8. *My Foolish Heart* by Ned Wahington/Victor Young; *The Man I Love* by Ira and George Gershwin; *Sweet and Lovely* by Arnhem-Tobias-Le Ma.

<sup>11</sup> In the 1950s Brazilian popular composers started to make more intimate lyrics, closer to the romantic experience of middle-class youth. They were the forerunners of the more intellectual middle class popular music genre known as *Bossa Nova*.

<sup>12</sup> According to the Bishop of Cremona these idolatries were: “the cult of the flesh, birth control, materialism, the cult of science, the cult of freedom.” D'AZEVEDO, 1949: 232-243

*thinking of the Positivist myth, to the Rights of Men in the French Revolution, to the libertarian individualism of anarchy.*<sup>13</sup>

For these authors, American influence was at the roots of the pro divorce and pro birth control campaigns, both against Catholic doctrine. The kind of relationship among young people of both sexes revealed in films, and timidly rehearsed in Protestant high schools in Brazil, contrasted with the segregation of the sexes which was the Catholic norm.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, there was also 'the bad influence' of movies and magazines behind the young people's problem.

However, French films<sup>15</sup> and the visit to Brazil of Juliette Greco, the so-called 'muse' of French Existentialism, very much publicised by newspapers and magazines, showed that not everything was to be emulated from France. The non-conformist attitudes of the existentialists were also copied by a more intellectual (and older) group of young people.

## *The Government Of Juscelino Kubitschek*

Notwithstanding current criticisms, today the Kubitschek Presidency is commonly evoked by the expression the 'golden years' – a time of hope in a near future when Brazil would be a great nation: "Those years are kept in the social memory as the expression of freedom, humour, cultural expansion, national development and democracy."<sup>16</sup> Kubitschek's political talent, which consisted in provoking a contagious feeling of hope and optimism, became an important catalyst in his development policies.

The ideology of modernisation flourished during his government (1955-1960).<sup>17</sup> He promised Brazil a period of progress and implemented a policy of import substitution in an attempt to secure national autarky in consumer durable. The seeds of development were contained in his government plan typified by the expression '50 years in 5'.<sup>18</sup> The plan led to

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<sup>13</sup> My emphasis. We need to remember that all of those ideas had strongly been condemned by the Popes in the nineteenth century. D'AZEVEDO, 1949:239.

<sup>14</sup> Presbyterian and Methodist high schools of American origin had been established in the principal capital cities of Brazil since the beginning of the century. Some were expensive boarding schools either for boys or for girls, but the majority were coeducational schools. They introduced a more pragmatic, and scientific approach instead of the more humanistic one endorsed by the Catholic schools. Therefore they were regarded as modern and more in tune with 'the new times'. So upper class families choose those schools for men keeping the girls in convents. See FREYRE, 1964.

<sup>15</sup> French cinema was famous for freely showing sex and nudes in the 1950s, when Hollywood was still under the Code Hays (1930-1966) which forbade any allusion to sex life in American films.

<sup>16</sup> BOMENY, 1991: 144.

<sup>17</sup> Kubitschek was popularly known as JK.

<sup>18</sup> Kubitschek's target plan was a blueprint for economic development by industrialisation which sought to plan investments in order to increase productivity and accelerate the accumulation of capital. The plan included 30 targets covering five sectors: energy (almost 50% of investments); transport, food, basic industry and education. Contrary to

impressive industrial growth, including automobile production by European and US industries. It included the construction of new roads and motor-ways to link the North to the South and a new futuristic capital city in the central Brazilian plains, which was to become the point of convergence for the entire country. Thus the economic growth, then restricted to the Eastern and Southern parts would be expanded to the rest of the country<sup>19</sup> building up Brazil as the future 'promised land'.

Kubitschek presented a public image of affability challenging the image of severity associated with the conventional dignity of the (presidential) role. A popular song called him '*Presidente Bossa Nova*' in appreciation of his modern style.<sup>20</sup> Just as Kubitschek travelled frequently to inspect public works and always flew, his wife and daughters often visited Europe, thus departing from the image of provincialism hitherto associated with Presidents' families. At this level too, speed and an enterprising and cosmopolitan spirit<sup>21</sup> entered the popular consciousness as signs of genuine modernity.

For the middle classes, the most important aspect of his policies was industrialisation based on consumer goods production (mainly domestic appliances). For the Brazilian population the automobile, television, telephone and refrigerator, which among other products characterise urban lifestyle, were the most visible signs of development.<sup>22</sup>

For the vast majority of the population many of Kubitschek's development programmes proved to be cosmetic and of no lasting benefit. There was an increasing demand for solutions for the grave social problems of the population,<sup>23</sup> rural organisations were growing, trade unions increasing their power; students extending their political participation through the UNE (National Union of Students). Sectors of the Catholic Church also began to engage more vigorously in political participation. All this coincided with a considerable disagreement within the ruling alliance between the landed and business sectors. The seeds for a political upheaval were growing and ripened in 1964 into a US-backed military coup ostensibly to save Brazil from the communists.

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international Monetary Fund (IMF) requests, it focused on accelerating economic growth rather than monetary stabilisation. Kubitschek was later to break the Brazilian agreement with the IMF. For an analysis of his *Programa de Metas* (Target Plan) see FARO & SILVA, 1991.

<sup>19</sup> From the new capital the Central Western and also the Northern parts of the country would be easily reached and then developed to the most modern standard.

<sup>20</sup> The reference to a *bossa nova* president associated Kubitschek with changes in government style. *Bossa nova* meant a new way of doing something and was an expression created at that time to characterise the new way of playing and singing the samba. The expression is analogous to (and contemporaneous with) the French *Nouvelle Vague*, which was the name of the new French cinema of the late 1950s/early 1960s. The song 'Presidente Bossa Nova' was written and recorded by Juca Chaves.

<sup>21</sup> It seems somewhat paradoxical to associate his preference for regional food with cosmopolitanism since the emphasis on folklore and regional culture in the 1950s was linked with nationalism.

<sup>22</sup> As Paul Singer has argued, urban lifestyle is a product of industrial capitalism which is transformed whenever different products become available. SINGER, 1986:223.

<sup>23</sup> Land reform; universal suffrage (granting the illiterate the vote); increased social spending.

## *Lacerda's "ill-loved" women*

The anti-Communist struggle was embodied in the conservative journalist turned politician, Carlos Lacerda. who was a prominent figure of the UDN - the political party which better represented American interests in Brazil - and leader of the opposition during both governments of the decade. Lacerda was famous for the 'vicious' and intransigent character of his attacks in which he rejected any compromise and exaggerated the severity of his charges.<sup>24</sup> Considered a very intelligent and charming man, his speeches were very popular among middle to upper class housewives who came under the influence of his articles and speeches about the evils of anything suspected of being against US policy.

These women became the fanatical propagandists of his ideas; in their fervour they exceeded what was socially expected of them – a strict allegiance to domestic affairs. Their conservative ideals, fanatical anti-communism and obstinate vindication of absolute Brazilian alignment to US-American policy made them easy prey for right-wing politicians. They strongly believed they were struggling in defence of the family, religion and freedom. Freedom, in their view, was simply the right to have Brazilian families and the Catholic Church in safer hands – that is under US protection.<sup>25</sup> Very soon those women started to be derided, and the label attached to them – '*As mal-amadas*' (the ill-loved women)<sup>26</sup>– reveals a great deal about gender prejudices relating to any public action undertaken by women at the time.

In addition to Lacerda's speeches the role played by the magazine *Seleções* ( 'The Readers Digest' in Portuguese translation ) in middle class opinion-formation, cannot be overlooked. Very popular at the time, it championed the Manichean propaganda of the 'American Way of Life' against the Soviet alternative. The magazine stressed the evils of Communism, chiefly the lack of religious freedom and the brain-washing of young people who were taught to denounce their parents and relatives. The sense of horror this image provoked in Brazilian housewives did not prevent them from advocating the same after the military coup in 1964. Apparently unaware of the similarity of the two positions, they urged families to denounce their children if they were suspected of being communists since they believed this evil had to be eradicated from Brazil once and for all.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> . President Vargas' suicide was directly caused by the campaigns Lacerda promoted accusing Vargas' advisors of corruption.

<sup>25</sup> These women similarly constituted the vast majority of those who took part in the march 'For God And For The Family' in 1964. The march was the excuse the military needed to stage the military coup and stay in power for the next 21 years.

<sup>26</sup> It is worth remembering that the same label is also attached to lesbians and feminists.

<sup>27</sup> SIMÕES, 1985.

## *Emulating the Developed World*

The construction of a modern nation could not be restricted to industrialisation and urbanisation: it was also necessary to bring Brazilian arts up to the standard of the best of the 'civilised world.' The root of the problem lay in the tension between the numerically small middle classes and the ruling elite (among them a sophisticated and better educated minority) and a very sizeable illiterate population. The elite assumed the mission of educating the public to appreciate new artistic styles far removed from their daily experiences; the wealthy elite from São Paulo would play a part in such a public education effort. In reality, only the middle classes, who could afford magazines and theatres were the focus of attention: educating the rest of the population only came to be considered an urgent task by a different group at the end of the decade.

This period was marked by some important high-culture initiatives purposed to link Brazil to the rest of the developed world, such as the '*Teatro Brasileiro de Comédia*' (TBC) in 1948, which aimed to create a repertoire of modern European and US plays. The group had high artistic ambitions and felt that even if they could not live in Paris or New York, they could at least perform the same plays that had been successes there. Instead of looking at the social problems and peculiarities of Brazil, they tried to be cosmopolitan in an effort to stress the similarities and not the differences between Europe and Brazil.<sup>28</sup>

Based on the experience of the Italian directors of the TBC, the '*Companhia Cinematográfica Vera Cruz*' was created in 1949 to produce 'real' Brazilian cinema, that is to say, films considered to be of sufficient quality even to be exported. In 1953 the film '*O Cangaceiro*'<sup>29</sup> was awarded the Golden Palm in Cannes which was considered proof that they were heading in the right direction. However, in 1954 the company became bankrupt and ceased its activities.

Another initiative to reproduce the 'best made in Europe' was the creation of '*Bienal de São Paulo*,' in 1951 on the model of the Venice Biennial. As the *Bienal* was widely reported in national magazines, words like abstractionism and cubism soon perplexed the public which generally found such paintings odd, ugly and incomprehensible<sup>30</sup> and were indiscriminately classified as 'futuristic'. The same fate befell poetry: Parnassian sonnets with their rigid rules and perfect rhyme and metre were/are still very much favoured, and considered synonymous with 'good poetry.' Thus what was known as modern poetry,

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<sup>28</sup> *Nosso Século, 1945-1960*. v 4:82-91.

<sup>29</sup> *O Cangaceiro* (1953), directed by Lima Barreto, depicted the life of Cangaceiro, a popular bandit from the Northeast of Brazil. Consequently, some considered this film an example of negative propaganda about Brazil.

<sup>30</sup> Even some newspapers had an analogous opinion. For instance, the *Correio da Manhã* reported the first *Bienal* as "having a cosmopolitan and anti-national orientation, diffusing degenerated, reactionary and decadent abstract art." Quoted by ÂNGELO [1990]: 106.

sounded like 'bad poetry'. Notwithstanding these critiques<sup>31</sup> modern art was positively regarded as a definite sign of the 'new times' and breaking with past values.

In 1955 the *Instituto Superior de Estudos Brasileiros* (ISEB) was created as a civilian counterpart to the *Escola Superior de Guerra* (ESG)<sup>32</sup> created in 1949 which had been set up on a basic model introduced by the United States all over Latin America.<sup>33</sup> The purpose of the intellectuals of the ISEB was to conceive an ideology for the development of the country. Although it has been regarded as an ideological legitimisation of Kubitschek's project these intellectuals had opposite purposes, trying to develop indigenous solutions to domestic problems.<sup>34</sup> As Mônica Pimenta Velloso has pointed out:

*they identified agrarian interests with foreign capital and industrial interests with the nation. They foresaw a new nation united around national interests, progress and industrial development. Their plans had a mobilising appeal since they intended to look for solutions to overcome under-development, integrate the popular social strata, and create art according to that 'new reality.'*<sup>35</sup>

The ISEB postulated the need to create an authentic Brazilian artistic language in order to achieve a real 'popular culture'— that is one made for the education of the masses. Art, literature, theatre and cinema were to be more than a source of pleasure for the senses: they were to reflect the social problems of Brazil and thus become instruments for the education of the people.

These intellectuals condemned both the sophisticated productions of the TBC and *Vera Cruz* and the popular productions the public favoured. They even despised the popular culture which emerged from the masses, believing that such an illiterate and impoverished people could not produce anything but misery and backwardness. According to them, artists and intellectuals should be engaged in the primordial task of 'leading the people towards their real destiny', producing and showing not what the public wanted but what was believed to be good for them.<sup>36</sup>

Several groups had different solutions for the education of the masses and their own vision of mass 'culture'. In the same way there were different conceptions of nationhood and nationalism.

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<sup>31</sup> A popular joke ran that a foreign man had taken the photograph of the former President – considered far from handsome – for a Picasso painting.

<sup>32</sup> These respectively are the Higher Institute for Brazilian Studies and Higher School of War.

<sup>33</sup> The aim of the ESG was to prepare an elite to run the country during a war between the US and the Soviet Union, then believed to be imminent. See RIBEIRO, 1985.

<sup>34</sup> See among others, MOTTA, 1977; CHAUI, 1984; ORTIZ, 1985.

<sup>35</sup> Kubitschek's programme worked for an internationalisation of the Brazilian economy. VELLOSO, 1991:123.

<sup>36</sup> Its postulation of an 'authentic' art based on social reality and search for a national style can be seen in the roots of the '*Cinema Novo*,' of the 'CPC'- *Centro Popular de Cultura*' (Popular Centre of Culture), at the beginning of the 1960s. The ideas of the ISEB also stimulated the debate about the '*Bossa Nova*' movement which had been criticized for the influences it had taken from jazz.



The magazine *O Cruzeiro*, normally a mouthpiece of US interests, paradoxically exaggerated in its promotion of the real values and traditions of Brazilians:<sup>37</sup> the owner of the magazine put great emphasis on using elements of regional culture in parties and decorations and even invented an '*Ordem do Vaqueiro*' (Herdsman's Order) to reward services and achievements.<sup>38</sup> To the Hollywood stars invited to Brazilian Carnival were given traditional *Bahiana* dress to wear at the opulent gala balls. Unlike the multicoloured dress used by Carmen Miranda<sup>39</sup> and regarded as exaggerated and of bad taste, they were beautifully made in white embroidered cloth. The intention was to offer an alternative image of distinction, elegance and good taste. . This was also part of a publicity strategy by the Bangu cotton industry, which involved the creation of Brazilian fashion based on national products and traditions.<sup>40</sup> These things were part of a 'legitimate nationalism' which was cosmetic but made sense in the importance given to the cosmopolitan character of the 'new elite' they were promoting.

Such stress on Brazilian folklore might at first sight appear paradoxical when cosmopolitanism was so much in vogue. The emphasis placed on features such as cookery, national products, proper names, and also exoticism is regarded as a sophisticated way of building a national identity in a cosmopolitan environment. The wide publicity given to these themes helped to build an atmosphere of pride, confidence and hope that in the near future Brazil could be a great nation and thus provided a support for Kubitschek's ideology, which was even to be shared by members of the opposition.

### *Soap Operas, Vaudeville and 'Chanchadas'*

To intellectual consternation, people preferred the '*Teatro de Revistas*' and radio (later in the decade television) to the TBC's plays and the '*Chanchadas*' to the Vera Cruz films. The very popular *Teatro de Revistas* was a kind of vaudeville which mixed political satire, debauched anecdote, music, dance, luxury and beautiful women with near-naked sculptural bodies. Specially invented onomatopoeic words in their titles suggested lewd connotations, creating an expectation of salaciousness. Whilst the *Teatro de Revistas* targeted a middle-class public, films known as *Chanchadas*,<sup>41</sup> were the more popular

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<sup>37</sup> For the analyses of the appropriation by the elite of cultural elements from socially and politically marginal groups and their conversion into symbols of nationhood see FRY, 1982.

<sup>38</sup> Its symbol was the traditional North-eastern herdsman's attire, which was to be worn by the laureates. The order was a mere pretext for parties and celebrations held in honour of famous foreign personalities.

<sup>39</sup> The dress popularised by Hollywood movies included enormous, brightly coloured platform shoes, a turban with a basket of tropical flowers and fruits on top, and an excess of necklaces and bracelets.

<sup>40</sup> Bangu was a cotton trademark. Its publicity also included a 'Miss Elegant Bangu' national contest widely reported by magazines. See Chapter 6.

<sup>41</sup> *Chanchadas*, a typical product of Rio, were seen as the result of quick, cheap and careless production; they were based on prurient humour, involved the work of artists who (according to the bourgeoisie) could barely muster a grimace;

equivalent and met with enormous success. *Chanchadas* were a peculiar form of cheap musical comedy which adopted many elements from popular culture – the circus, vaudeville, radio, Carnival music. The bourgeoisie deeply resented them and considered such success almost offensive to its good intentions: such vulgarity and primitivism were the 'viscera' of the social body, whilst 'serious' film and theatre plays represented its head and intelligence.<sup>42</sup>

Another popular form of leisure was radio,<sup>43</sup> especially soap operas, comedy and musical shows. The musical radio shows (called *Programas de Auditório*) were attended by lower-class girls such as domestic servants and shopkeepers who constituted enthusiastic fan clubs which disputed the popularity of their idols. In 1954 the magazine *A Cigarra* attacked the fan-clubs as

*a poor imitation of what has been made in America for many years. Remember Frank Sinatra's quick rise to fame: now the same phenomenon is starting in Brazil, with the same fainting which costs (the artist) Cr\$300,00 for hysterical screaming and Cr\$200,00 for silent fainting.*<sup>44</sup>

Such behaviour was considered proof of the lack of education of the Brazilian public who only emulated the worst of other countries.<sup>45</sup> Since they could only ape their US counterparts these girls were called '*macacas de auditório*' (studio monkeys). This expression embodied several deprecatory ideas: firstly, it criticised the lack of judgement in imitating the 'civilised world'; secondly, it referred to their uneducated behaviour—screaming, fainting, crying, mobbing, noisy applause— which made them look like a mob of monkeys; thirdly, it transported a racist connotation, since people of mixed parentage and Blacks, who predominated in the lower classes, made up the audience of those shows.<sup>46</sup>

Special magazines<sup>47</sup> were launched in order to celebrate radio stars as the Brazilian counterpart to the star system of Hollywood and the necessary adaptations were made to

the acting was improvised and the scenarios poor. See CATANI & SOUZA, 1983; AUGUSTO 1980, and 1989; DIAS, 1993.

<sup>42</sup> For instance, one such film was *Nem Sansão nem Dalila* (Neither Samson or Delilah) in which Samson was played by a tall, skinny comic artist and Delilah by a black short male with a blond wig. At the time it was considered grotesque and was rejected by the critics; however, it was later re-evaluated as a film of corrosive humor and political satire.

<sup>43</sup> An analysis of radio in this period is made by GOLDFEDER, 1980.

<sup>44</sup> Quoted by MORAES, 1980:38.

<sup>45</sup> This accusation was frequently repeated throughout the decade on different occasions and for several reasons. This is true of, for instance, the teenagers who emulated James Dean, of those who enjoyed rock'n'roll. The critics said that the Brazilian people were known as '*macaquitos*' (little monkeys) by the rest of the world because they could only ape others.

<sup>46</sup> GOLDFEDER (1980: 175) only considers the racist and classist connotation implicit in the choice of the word 'macaca' (female monkey) used to label these fans.

<sup>47</sup> Such as *Revista do Rádio* and *Radiolândia*.

ensure that features were in keeping with Brazilian traditions and feelings.<sup>48</sup> Such magazines commonly emphasised the domestic part of a star's way of life, inventing romances between idols, speculating about their marriages, babies and their domestic environment. For Miriam Goldfeder these magazines projected to their readers patterns of femininity, which although out of reach still functioned as an important ideal point of reference<sup>49</sup>

The most popular soap opera of the decade was *O Direito de Nascer* (A Right to Be Born) by the Cuban author Felix Caignet.<sup>50</sup> It was a vigorous attack against abortion and single parenthood and a condemnation of wealth and the way the upper classes lived.<sup>51</sup> Radio (and its magazines) disseminated conservative moral values, reproducing an idealised world view in which the happy ending restated ideological patterns. This meant the predominance of romantic love, the victory of good over evil, and the everlasting validity of social values.

At first glance, it seems that the tension between modernity and backwardness in the intellectual and artistic fields could be identified with the opposition between 'high brow' and 'low brow' culture<sup>52</sup> where the first stressed sophistication, 'vanguardism' and good taste, and the later, kitsch, tradition and vulgarity. However, such identification would be too simplistic: in spite of the label of backwardness inflicted by the intellectuals over 'Chanchadas', in a sense these films reflected modernity for their public. Up to then, radio stars were only in reach of the public who could attend the studio programs in Rio. 'Chanchadas' made those voices come to life and their performance watched throughout Brazil. If for Vera Cruz modernisation was represented by serious films, good actors and 'good taste'<sup>53</sup>, 'Chanchadas' represented technological advance compared to circus and radio whose audience was identical.

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<sup>48</sup> In the advertisements of a popular soap called *Eucalol*, radio stars proclaimed: "I'm a loving mother, that is why I use this soap for the delicate skin of my baby." Advertisements such as this thus emulated those of *Lux* in the United States, but placed the stress on mothering rather than seduction.

<sup>49</sup> *These magazines translated a universe of feminine values, exalting popular domestic myths such as family life, motherhood, the possibility of an everlasting happiness created by a charming prince. That is to say— the space of an individual, romantic-bourgeois self-realisation* GOLDFEDER, 1980: 167.

<sup>50</sup> Miriam Goldfeder has pointed out that the author incorporated some false dilemmas, sometimes extraneous to the main narrative, in order to maintain audience interest and prolong the programme's duration. However, nothing was entirely gratuitous. What was extraneous to the plot always functioned to stress moral values. **The same story was twice adapted to the TV meeting always a huge success.**

<sup>51</sup> It is interesting to note that in a report about 'The Gift You Should Give to Your Boyfriend' a popular singer had given this suggestion: "Give him your enduring virtue since spiritual values are worthier than any material good." That is something beyond money and wealth *Revista do Rádio*, 1/1/1959; quoted by GOLDFEDER, 1980: 51.

<sup>52</sup> For the critique of the 'three levels of culture proposed by Dwight MacDonald in *Against the American Grain* see ECO, 1970.

<sup>53</sup> Actually Vera Cruz also produced several popular films, far removed from their pattern of 'good quality' with commercial ends to fund the 'artistic' ones.

## *The Catholic Church in the 1950s Brazil*

In the 1950s, two tendencies were clearly visible in the Catholic Church in Brazil.<sup>54</sup> First, the traditionalist tendency, described as 'sociological, ritualistic and sentimental'. It was considered 'sociological Catholicism' for being the religion of the majority, baptised at birth, who passively accepted its rules and rituals; ritualistic, because it placed greater emphasis on the form than on the meaning of religious practices, either liturgical such as the Mass, or devotional as the use of medals, the lighting of candles and promises; sentimentalist because of these practices considered by the hierarchy to be almost superstitious. Traditional religion persisted in the parishes led by secular priests, in some lay movements,<sup>55</sup> in religious schools and other institutions. It was centred on the clergy,<sup>56</sup> who had all the authority, and presented to the public a religion of sin, guilt and fear.

The second tendency was a more intellectual one, born from the *Movimento Litúrgico*. The aim of this Movement was to offer a religious point view compatible with the feelings of the modern urban intellectual stratum.<sup>57</sup>

During the 1950s the Church entered a long period of change. This renovation was stimulated by the new documents from the Vatican about liturgy, exegesis and catechism. Nevertheless the hierarchy still had its social place beside 'the opulent sectors' and the political elite as its main interlocutor. Although the Church in Brazil was sensitive about the enormous social problems of the country, its proposals had a moral and grandiloquent accent, endorsing the governmental project of developmentism, even offering its

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<sup>54</sup> Based in previous accounts made by sociologists and theologians, Cândido Procópio Camargo propose the following types: a) Rural Traditional Catholicism; b) Urban Traditional Catholicism; c) Rural Internalised Catholicism; d) Urban Internalised Catholicism. He classified as traditional "the social and religious behaviour rooted in habits and traditions. That is there is little knowledge of the religious values which explain norms and social roles. In the same way there is no rational explanation for religious behaviour and no explicit distinction between norms and values of the society at large and those of the religious collective." On the contrary, the internalised Catholicism "gives to the individual explicit and conscious perception of the religious values. There is a rational coherence between these values and the individual's social behaviour. There is also a tendency to occur a relative differentiation between those conscious religious values and the axiological system of society at large." CAMARGO 1973: 49. For the purposes of this thesis it does not matter if the religious phenomenon is rural or urban. That is why I aggregate them in just two categories: traditional and modern (as synonymous to the internalised types)

<sup>55</sup> Such as the *Pia Sociedade das Filhas de Maria* (The Pious Society of the Daughters of Mary); *Congregados Marianos* (Marian Congregate); *Apostolado da Oração*; the Children's *Cruzada Eucarística* (Eucharistic Crusade).

<sup>56</sup> Actually, in the rural areas, missionary priests only went once a year, to sanctify marriages and christening, and for the preaching of the Holy Missions. For the rest of the year people lived a domestic religion of 'lots of saints and lack of Masses, living far from priests and the sacramental practice of the Church.' BEOZZO, 1984: 280.

<sup>57</sup> Contrary to similar movements at that time in Europe (mainly in France and Germany) it did not mean a return to the sources of a popular religious sentiment. In Brazil, they were opposed to 'the traditional routine of a emotional, 'sociological' and ritualistic form of religion, which they regarded as a degradation of pure Catholicism.' SANCHIS, 1985: 63.

collaboration. In its view, problems were not structural but circumstantial and due to corruption and abuses.<sup>58</sup>

In the 1950s, the increasing urbanisation of the country also 'urbanised' the Catholic population.<sup>59</sup> The statistical importance of workers in the bulk of the population had increased and the Church had to deal with a different public as consequence of the quick and progressive advance of capitalist forms of production. Instead of peasants or a lower class with strong rural culture now were employees, workers, civil servants and students whose daily life was characterised by science and technology and had just recovered the right to vote. In addition, workers began to be exposed to new doctrines: from the more aggressive proselytism of North American Protestant sects<sup>60</sup>; Kardecism and afro-religions<sup>61</sup>; and also Marxism. Therefore, the Church hierarchy had to consider popular aspirations and reformulate its action.<sup>62</sup>

The answer would come from inside the *Ação Católica Brasileira* ( Brazilian Catholic Action), which had been created in 1934,<sup>63</sup> This 'lay aristocracy ' was recruited mainly from among former students from Catholic schools and members of the bourgeoisie, especially the young. The objective of this movement was to bring religion into the public sphere, to the profane domain of business and economy, science and social issues changing its emphasis on issues which were exclusively problems of individual conscience. For Pius XI, founder of Catholic Action, lay persons, through their professional activities, had the potential to increase the influence of the Church in these domains. One of their main challenge would be to organise themselves so as to be able to compete with the power that Communism was credited to have over the pauperised people living in the periphery of the cities and in rural areas.<sup>64</sup> They also had to think of a way of struggling against the "inertia of

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.:115-116. The Brazilian writer Gustavo Corção epitomises quite well such a tendency. See chapter 8.

<sup>59</sup> PIERUCCI, DANTAS & CAMARGO, 1981.

<sup>60</sup> Up to 1930s, Protestantism in Brazil was represented by Lutherans. It was linked to German immigration in the eastern and southern states, and they did not have a special aim to convert new followers. BEOZZO, 1984:331. See also CAMARGO, 1973:105-124.

<sup>61</sup> In the 1950s there were two different interpretations of Umbanda – an Afro-Brazilian religion. The first, developed among the lower class, had strong roots in Candomblé. The other, also called Umbanda Branca, which spread among the white middle classes in the 1950s, was regarded by the first as an attempt to absorb symbols and history of Umbanda, with the simultaneous devaluation of its ritual and practices. They abandoned the use of drums, the use of African songs, ritual killing of animals and the making of sacred dishes to feed the 'saints'. At the same time the influence of Kardecism, also called scientific Spiritism, increased into the 'Umbanda Branca'. (BROWN 1977:36-37.)

<sup>62</sup> If the Church changed in the 1950s it was due to the transformations of society. Not only did the faithful develop a more demanding attitude, they started to be confronted by ideological competitors – religious or otherwise PIERUCCI, 197: 355.

<sup>63</sup> First the Catholic Action was based on the centralised and authoritarian Italian model. In spite of its expansion in Brazil it did not last for long. Later it was re-organised following the French and Belgian models which also had specialised Youth sectors. For an analysis of the problems that the Catholic Action faced before its re-organisation in the 1950s see BEOZZO, 1984a :30-34.

<sup>64</sup> At the end of the 1940s, the Catholic Church declared Communism to be its main enemy.

the Catholic people who succumbed to modern errors in their daily life,"<sup>65</sup> "re-Christianising the Christians." Moreover, followers needed to be mobilised for active Christian militancy. Several specialised movements were created for young people inside Catholic Action, from the end of the 1940s.<sup>66</sup> The idea was to form leaders who would come from each milieu and act inside it, more by their example than by aggressive action. Some of these movements were also linked to the more intellectual *Movimento de Renovação Litúrgica* (Liturgical Renovation Movement), which gravitated around Dominican and Benedictine convents and was deeply influenced by French philosophers and intellectuals such as Jacques and Raissa Maritain. These movements would have a decisive influence in sectors of civil life, and had a large appeal for middle-class woman who started to have a new role in Church movements.

During the decade the Church started to change the direction of its rhetoric about alleged 'enemies'. Not only Communism but also Capitalism, albeit with less emphasis, began to be seen as perverse and atheistic. The position of the Church was thus ambivalent: despite its formal condemnation of both systems, it did not clearly oppose the huge anti-Communist campaign led by some politicians and part of the press, which equated Evil with the Soviet Union and Communism on the one hand, and Goodness with the United States and Capitalism on the other. Sectors of the Church proclaimed this a false dichotomy stating that no one has to choose between two iniquities' and proposed the social doctrine of the Church as 'third way'.<sup>67</sup>

A leading position was then taken by JUC - the branch formed by students from Universities. JUC's models for a Christian attitude towards social problems mixed the ideas of the French Abbé Pierre – founder of the Emaus Community which helped beggars in Paris; the Little Brothers and Sisters of Father Foucauld,<sup>68</sup> and the French Dominican Péré Lebret.<sup>69</sup> In his work P. Lebret proposed a 'Christian Humanism' based on solidarity and the

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<sup>65</sup> PIERUCCI: 353.

<sup>66</sup>The first was the J.O.C. (*Juventude Operária Católica* – Catholic Worker Youth), in 1948. Soon after there was one movement for each vowel: JAC, JEC, JIC, JOC, JUC, where A stood for Agrarian, E for Estudantil, that is for secondary students, I for Independent – that is for professionals, O for *Operária* (Worker), and U for University – that is for undergraduate students.

<sup>67</sup> That 'third way' would come from: "a social order based upon the principles of the revealed truth and the norms of justice and equity." PIERUCCI:363. See also OLIVEIRA, 1977 ; WEFFORT, 1977.

<sup>68</sup> Their official names were Little Brothers of Jesus (founded in 1933) and Little Sisters of Jesus (1936). Their mission was to live among the poorest labouring classes, seeking to experience the economic and social milieu where they lived. Their stress was on manual labour. The sisters lived in ordinary dwellings (instead of the usual nunneries), and had to earn their living by manual labour on farms and in factories. They were not founded, but inspired, by Father Foucauld (1858-1916), who lived as a hermit among Muslims in the deserts of North Africa.

<sup>69</sup> Louis Joseph Lebret, OP (1897-1965). Dominican priest and founder of the *Economie et Humanisme* – a centre for research. The aim of his movement was to establish an economic system at the service of humankind. At the end of the 1950s he led a research project in the shanty towns of Rio de Janeiro. Péré Lebret 's main books were well known in Brazil early before some of them had been translated into Portuguese at the turn of the 1960s: *Suicídio ou Sobrevivência do Ocidente* (Suicide ou Survie de l'Occident?), *O Drama do Século XX: miséria, subdesenvolvimento, incosnsiência,*

search of the common good. However, their concrete activity would show the impossibility of keeping to that 'third way' and they could hardly avoid a political engagement which had been formerly forbidden — Marxist formulations were incorporated into their discourse exchanging the Humanism of Maritain for the Personalism of Emmanuel Mounier.<sup>70</sup> This marked a schism with other branches of Catholic Action, and created problems with the Catholic hierarchy, who considered them 'Communist infiltrates of the Church'.<sup>71</sup>

## *Living The Brazilian Dream*

### *Rio De Janeiro, An Outstanding Space*

In 1950, Brazil had 51 944.397 inhabitants of which only 36% lived in urban centres. 23% of them were concentrated in just two large cities, Rio and São Paulo, whilst 13% were distributed among other four capital cities of Brazilian states.<sup>72</sup> The 1950s were a decade of rapid urban growth. The unequal development of the country concentrated the best of urban infrastructure in few cities. The capital cities of Brazilian states, which were regional poles, attracted internal migration. Therefore they registered a huge population increase.<sup>73</sup>

As the next table reveals, the difference between Rio, São Paulo and the others was immense. Therefore these two cities were the 'Mecca' for people looking for the best opportunities in terms of employment, leisure and education.

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esperança (1963); *Princípios para Ação* (1965) ( *Principes pour l'action* ) ; *Manifesto por uma Civilização Solidária* (Manifeste pour une civilisation solidaire).

<sup>70</sup> Emmanuel Mounier (1905-1950) was a left wing French philosopher, author of *Le Personalisme*, who proposed 'a necessary corrective to Marxism'. (New Catholic Encyclopaedia v 10:44).

<sup>71</sup>To solve these problems and to achieve more political autonomy in the early 1960s, members of the JUC created out of the Church a political movement named AP: '*Ação Popular*' (Popular Action). Its members, would be persecuted after the Military Coup in 1964. The same happened with several members of the youth branches of Catholic Action, marking its end.

<sup>72</sup> In the 1950s there were 21 states and 6 federal territories (ruled by a federal appointed governor).

<sup>73</sup> It helped to shape the structure of regional development in Brazil, where the South developed at the expense of the Northern and North-eastern regions, and the capital cities at the expense of the rest of the state.

CITIES	POPULATION		Growth Rate (%)
	1950	1960	
Rio	2 303 063	3 307 163	43.5
S.Paulo	2 200 000	3 800 000	73.0
Recife	512 370	797 234	56.0
Salvador	389 422	655 735	68.0
B.Horizonte	352 724	693 328	97.0
Curitiba	138 178	361 309	261.4

Source: *Nosso Século 1945-1960* p 151-175

Rio de Janeiro had been the capital city from 1760 to 1960. São Paulo which was in the second place in 1950, jumped to the first in 1954 reaching 2 700 000 inhabitants. It became the largest city of the country the fourth in the Americas and the eleventh of the world. Its slogan was 'São Paulo never stops growing' and attracted a huge number of migrants either from the poorer states of the country as from overseas. Although São Paulo had already consolidated its place as an important industrial and business centre, its people had a reputation of being more provincial and formal than those of Rio.

Rio was considered a cosmopolitan city, importing and adopting new fashion, patterns of behaviour and moral values. *O Cruzeiro* and *Manchete* gave publicity to that lifestyle, and their readers everywhere could enjoy a vicarious participation in that world of glamour and modernity. More precisely, its fame as a cosmopolitan place was due to Copacabana, the most visible face of Rio. This district on the Atlantic in the Southern part of the city made a huge contrast to the suburbs considered as provincial and backward as any small town in the countryside.<sup>74</sup>

By virtue of being the capital city, besides a large commercial and banking system, Rio concentrated a huge federal administrative complex.<sup>75</sup> Therefore it provided best opportunities for employment in the tertiary sector; many civil servants from small towns looked for an opportunity to transferred there.

For the critics the other side of the coin was the proliferation of vice and evil in those places. Such was the lack of moral values that virtue (identified with traditional values) became impotent in the face of vice (identified with modernity and newness).

In a remarkable article in *O Cruzeiro* journalist David Nasser tells the story of a civil servant who came from a small town in search of better schooling for his only daughter.

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<sup>74</sup> Rio de Janeiro's geography of status and prestige has much to do with its topography. The prestigious Southern area is a narrow strip of land between the sea and the mountains. Tunnels give access to the less prestigious Northern part, beyond the mountains, the outskirts meeting rural areas. In that opposition of status and prestige, *Copacabana* was also distinct from other Southern areas, deemed to be more provincial. The same was true of some Northern districts regarded as middle-class areas (Tijuca, Meier, Grajaú) which were distinct from the suburbs, definitely the least prestigious places of all.

<sup>75</sup> In 1950 there were 60 000 civil servants in the federal administration in Rio.



However, there she became acquainted with a group of 'rebels without a cause' and was seduced by one of them. Contrary to the rules of the traditional code of honour, he did not 'repair' the error.<sup>76</sup> Their daughter left home and as a 'dishonoured girl' her natural path was prostitution, bringing shame and sorrow for her parents. However, in spite of everything the parents did not want to leave Rio.

This paradox encapsulates the dilemma confronted by the readers of the weekly magazines. For them Rio was indeed a place of good and evil; their children could be exposed to dangerous situations but Rio was chiefly a shop window of modernity for the whole country; living there was thus a cherished goal for many people. And once they moved to Rio, the next step was to live in Copacabana. According to *O Cruzeiro*: "Living in Rio is a dream; staying at home in Copacabana, a privilege."<sup>77</sup>

### *Copacabana the Oniric Place of Good and Evil.*

*Copacabana* is a 5 km narrow strip of land between the sea and the mountains, as other districts from the Southern area of Rio. In 1950 its 220,345 m<sup>2</sup> registered 129,249<sup>78</sup> inhabitants – the highest demographic concentration in the world, with a population that duplicated every 25 years. To house everyone who wanted to live there, the solution was to substitute the old detached houses with flats – regarded as a sign of progress. According to *O Cruzeiro* two French journalists stated that the urban expansion of Rio surpassed human understanding. The same magazine proudly showed old houses being pulled down: "Soon a new building will be built here. Instead of housing just one family, many others will be living there."<sup>79</sup> The democratic accent adopted in the post war years was also present in this discourse.

*Vertical expansion started in the 1940s and increased in the 1950s. High rise buildings mushroomed everywhere to serve the demand, not only for housing, but as a good financial investment<sup>80</sup> – tiny studio flats housing many people in a very small area.*

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<sup>76</sup> For the traditional code of honour and the complex of honour and shame, see Chapter 2 of this thesis.

<sup>77</sup> 'Por uma Menina Viva' *O Cruzeiro*, 13/1/53: 95.

<sup>78</sup> 53,928 men and 75,321 women. *O Cruzeiro* praised that highest demographic concentration as a sign of progress and one of the advantages of *Copacabana*. *O Cruzeiro*, 31/1/53:9.

<sup>79</sup> *O Cruzeiro*, 13/1/53: 28. In 1959 no more than 30 detached houses still remained at the Atlantic Avenue. *Manchete*, 12/9/59:58-60.

<sup>80</sup> In 1952 there were 5 000 of them in *Copacabana*. An entrepreneur boasted that his enterprise alone had built 728 flats in 1952, two for each day of the year. This represented a profile of 600 million of cruzeiros, then corresponding to 7.5 billions of francs. From 1950 to 1954, 20 billion Cruzeiros, one third of all money circulating in the country was invested in the real estate market in Rio. "The time is near when there will be no empty place on *Copacabana's* shore. Posterity will silently praise the intelligence of those who foresaw the advantages of applying their money in something reliable [a flat in *Copacabana*]. Its valorisation will guarantee an invaluable inheritance for their children and grandchildren, compared to having an apartment in New York." *O Cruzeiro* 13/1/53: 95.

Real estate speculation in Rio led to the construction of high buildings, side by side along the beach. At that time it was regarded as "a new and modern form of landscape beauty" (*O Cruzeiro* *ibid.*). This high barrier of concrete prevents the

Gilberto Velho's book '*Utopia Urbana*'<sup>81</sup> deals with the question of those who had moved to *Copacabana* to live in the studio flats,<sup>82</sup> in high buildings of bad reputation, tagged '*Balança Mas Não Cai*,<sup>83</sup> the name of a popular radio program :

*low-priced 20 to 50 flats a floor, inhabited by the sub-employed, cabaret dancers, students, journalists, and young couples without the means to live elsewhere. However, there one could also find families with up to 7 children.*<sup>84</sup>

His analysis stresses the paradoxical situation of several of its inhabitants: extensive families of lower strata who had sold their bungalows in the suburbs – usually with large flower, fruit and vegetable gardens – in order to live in these tiny flats mockingly described as reduced to a little stove and a chamber pot. The combination of lack of water – then a huge problem in Rio <sup>85</sup> – hot weather, and crowded space was far from comfortable. Besides, those buildings were stigmatised addresses which they had to hide from others,<sup>86</sup> a situation considered as a symptom of a disintegrating society, and very much condemned in the normative literature.<sup>87</sup> Nevertheless the myth of *Copacabana* remained above all its discomforts.

sea breeze from reaching the areas of the district away from the coast as the mountains always did for the Northern part of Rio. Therefore they are very hot places today. Besides, there was no consideration about the development of an infrastructure to support that huge concentration of people. The high buildings once regarded as a sign of progress are considered today as a portrait of the entrepreneurs' greed; a scandalous landmark of unplanned urban development. Gradually *Copacabana* started to lose its prestige in favour of neighbour beaches as Ipanema and Leblon.

<sup>81</sup> See the Introduction of this thesis for the importance of this study for the Brazilian anthropology.

<sup>82</sup> The anthropologist Gilberto Velho gives a personal account in the introduction of his book about the reasons why people moved to *Copacabana*: *Compared to Grajaú where I had lived, Copacabana was a new world – beaches, a lot of cinemas, shops and people. In Grajaú I used to live in a house, in Copacabana it was a flat on the fifth floor of a building. I remember quite well how I proudly told my teachers and friends that my family was moving to Copacabana. It provoked admiration and, I would suggest then, – a bit of envy. I also felt I would take part in the prestige provided by 'the aristocratic environment' of Copacabana. My family had moved to achieve better living conditions and I did not like to come back to the Northern area. Though I later moved away from Copacabana, I never thought about leaving the Southern part of the city.* VELHO, 1973:12-13. *Grajaú* the place where he had lived before is a Northern middle-class district in Rio.

<sup>83</sup> *O Balança Mais Não Cai*, a weekly radio program, poured scorn over life in a highrise building of studio flats in Copacabana. However, even by mocking the cherished ideal of the middle classes the program had not gone beyond the limits of ironical comment: it neither represented a corrosive critique nor an instrument for changing the social system of values.

<sup>84</sup> POERNER, 1965: 30. Usually those flats had been bought for rental. In the beginning of the 1950s a studio flat was rented for 2 500 cruzeiros when the average wages for a worker was 1 115 cruzeiros. Their owners seldom lived there. Gilberto Velho's father had one studio flat for rental, where the anthropologist later lived as a newly-wed postgraduate student, which provided him the grounds for his analysis of the issue. VELHO, *ibid*

<sup>85</sup> This situation was the theme of a popular Carnival song, '*Tomara que Chova*' (literally, hoping to God it's gonna rain!) from Paquito and Romeu Gentil, 1951.

<sup>86</sup> See VELHO, 1974.

<sup>87</sup> Gustavo Corção denounced those flats which looked like drawers 'to file' the families. As a consequence, he added, people had more comfort, privacy and space in the offices than at home. He regretted that as a consequence people preferred to stay on the streets than at home. *Revista da Semana* 58 (47) 29/11/58.

This myth was built of many elements: beaches, shops, restaurants and a lot of people on the streets – locals and tourists. People said they were looking for 'more movement' when they moved to *Copacabana*.<sup>88</sup> Motion as opposed to stillness is very much associated with the idea of progress and modernity. It is not only represented by more people, cars and buses on the streets, electrification made the night alive with advertising signs, lights and shop windows displays. It contrasted with the emptiness and darkness of the evenings and nights in distant places, the characteristic stillness of the suburb and the small towns. Young people living in these places habitually complain: *Nothing happens here*.<sup>89</sup> Nights in *Copacabana* were full of people going in and out of bars and restaurants.

*Copacabana* was also the place of rich and charming people.<sup>90</sup> Along its avenues 'the most modern and expensive cars of the world paraded.'<sup>91</sup> or tanned '*brotinhos*'<sup>92</sup> could be seen wearing revealing clothes, smart '*balzaqueanas*'<sup>93</sup> and playboys with high foreheads, becoming higher after James Dean and Elvis Presley. Magazines created the derisive stereotype of the handsome *Copacabana* boys – athletes of the beach. who spent all day improving their muscles rather than their intellects—.<sup>94</sup> They were either the rich '*filhinhos-do-papai*'<sup>95</sup> or poor boys from less prestigious districts or suburbs, looking for the opportunity of seducing and marrying a rich girl. Both could be confounded in the democratic space of the beach, where signs of status were harder to identify.

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<sup>88</sup> See the resume of the interviews in VELHO,1973, Annexe 1. CORÇÃO (1958) criticised the lifestyle which he characterised as being animated by a feverish agitation, by a mobility born from an intimate effervescence, by an anxiety, by a kind of epidemic 'itching ' in the soul. The result was a 'jumping race' of people who hated to stay in the calm monotony of home.

<sup>89</sup> See VELHO, 1974. HEILBORN, 1984.

<sup>90</sup> "The owner of great fortunes lived in *Copacabana*. Some exchanged the austerity of mansion houses in Botafogo and Laranjeiras, for flats which filled a whole floor (*um-por-andar*). Flats with refrigeration device, conservatories"... And the report exaggerated in the description of its grandeur: one conservatories for each season: "for the winter, spring, autumn and summer time." This expression '*um por andar*' captured the status and excellence of some flats. One of these flats in a prestigious address, like the Atlantic Av. in *Copacabana*, was an indisputable sign of wealth and/or high status, in a report about the 1950s.

Nevertheless a neighbouring beach –*Arpoador* –informed that it was already a more stylish place. "The indisputable upper class had already left *Copacabana* in favour of *Arpoador*." (*Manchete*, 21/3/53). That was also the address for "middle-class girls dreaming of a higher status, authentic millionaire men and playboys making believe they were rich." *O Cruzeiro* 7/2/53. For *Manchete* the cause of that preference was that "the Coca Cola generation", "*nouveaux-riches*" and "the peaceable petty bourgeoisie proliferate in *Copacabana*." *Manchete* 21/3/53.

<sup>91</sup> *O Cruzeiro* 31/1/53:9

<sup>92</sup> Literally sapling, a slang expression of that time for teenager girls. The expression was popularised after a Carnival song *Meu Brotinho* (1947) from Luiz Gonzaga and Humberto Teixeira.

<sup>93</sup> A slang of that time for a woman in her thirties. It came from Balzac's novel "*La Femme de Trente Ans*" (The name was popularised after a popular Carnival song *Balzaqueana* from Wilson Batista and Nassara, 1950.)

<sup>94</sup> The verses of a popular song defined them quite well: "an athletic body with a child brain." *Mocinho Bonito*, 1956, from Billy Blanco. First recorded by Doris Monteiro. Ronaldo and Cassio Murilo, the murders of Aída Cúri were called *Copacabana* boys.

<sup>95</sup> Literally *Daddy's Little Sons*, the given name of the rich but difficult young men: those who did not study, work, or have any obligation other than living from the family's money, name and social prestige. For their petty offences they benefit from almost impunity due to the prestige and wealth of their parents.

*Copacabana* inaugurated a new lifestyle in contrast to the one regarded as more akin 'to our traditions'. *O Cruzeiro* explained

*In Copacabana everything goes, because there are no 'comadres'<sup>96</sup> to gossip. If a girl from Tijuca<sup>97</sup> did just half of the naughty things a Copacabana teenager use to do, she would be banned from the area.*

*However, the sea, a great levelling element, sanctions any form of behaviour. Women can wear their slacks and smoke on the streets,<sup>98</sup> men could be seen pulling baby trolleys with British impassability and no one would gaze at them. And love is free – in a good sense, of course. Young couples have the right to stroll along the streets, hugging and kissing without provoking a second glance.<sup>99</sup>*

According to this discourse the myth of *Copacabana* included a redefinition of gender patterns of behaviour and of moral standards for the middle classes. Scandalous behaviour was the label imposed on women smoking in public places and on public demonstrations of love. Men doing a 'woman's job' like pushing a pram would be criticised in backward places. Such sights were represented as a sign of modernity quite in accordance with a progressive area like *Copacabana*. However, even in a 'progressive' space 'love was free' but still conformed to the right norms.

Although *Copacabana* and its lifestyle represented only a very small sample of Brazilian society, it outlined its dreams of modernisation and progress and epitomised the evil of progress and modernisation,<sup>100</sup> the threat to traditional moral values, the menace surrounding family and 'family girls' honour.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> *Comadre* is the woman to whom one is acquainted by means of *Compadrio*. That is also the popular name given to women who 'pay attention to other people's way of life' chatting and gossiping about it. Gossips is very much associated with the small-towns/suburban lifestyle

<sup>97</sup> A considered to be a middle class area in the Northern part of Rio.

<sup>98</sup> Smoking in public was long considered inappropriate behaviour for women. Trousers were considered attire just for picnics and going to countryside. In a way, the presence of the two on the streets could be regarded as a form of transgression. And both, smoking and wearing trousers, were considered to be signs of modernity.

<sup>99</sup> *O Cruzeiro* 31/1/53:9.

<sup>100</sup> Sylvan Paezzo invented the word '*Copacabanismo*' to express the "evils of modern society" menacing the safety of family and children. (PAEZZO 1965 :65) João Mohana, a priest author of a popular manual of sexual education, was very explicit about its evils and moral dangers: "No my friend, we can't be optimist about *Copacabana*. Confidence on [spending] Sundays in *Copacabana* is either gross innocence, or camouflaged lewdness. Who are the sexually disorders but the optimists of all the *Copacabanas*? What the use of recommending –go to the beach –if you will return physically healthy, but spiritually sick? You will come back apparently calm, but sexually excited –with instigated glands and provoked entrails." MOHANA, 1960:144.

<sup>101</sup> For an explanation of the meaning of the expression 'family girls' see Chapter 2 of this thesis.

# *The Multiple Faces Of A Changing Society*

## *The New Middle Classes*

To fully understand the social context of Rio de Janeiro in the 1950s it is necessary to look at the new middle-classes which emerged after the politics of JK. These were the families who could live the good life in *Copacabana*, residing not in the flats but in the comfortable apartments on the streets crossing the fashionable Atlantic Avenue. Their projects for upward mobility included exclusive schools for their children – either traditional convents ruled by French nuns such as Notre Dame, Sion, Sacré Coeur; or the modern American Presbyterian Bennet School for their daughters; schools ruled by Jesuits or Benedictine monks for the boys. In any of these schools, or in fashionable social clubs, they would join the upper classes – a good investment for better social capital.

In an inverse movement of the migration to *Copacabana*, middle- to upper-class families started to send their sons to expensive boarding schools located in small towns. They brought to those places new slang expressions, their fashionable clothes and their taste in popular music, being very much disputed as <sup>102</sup>'namorados' by girls eager for a vicarious participation in the glamour of the larger cities. However, they were looked upon with suspicion by local families who feared what seemed a bad influence on local young people. These adults suspected that behind their transfer were one of these uninviting situations: either their families had not succeeded in controlling their behaviour, or there were anomalous family situations such as separation or second marriage— the 'Orphans of Living Parents.'<sup>103</sup> Locals preferred to keep them away from their children since anyone coming from *Copacabana* were suspected of being "Americanised youngsters seduced by frivolous dreams, beauty contests, sexual crimes, easy ways of becoming richer, and the "café-society."<sup>104</sup>

*Copacabana* was also populated by a majority of middle-class families, represented by the middle ranks of the Army, civil servants and employees of federal banks. They also invested in good education for their children, but could not afford the expensive and exclusive schools. They favoured either the good education of traditional lay schools or the modern schools where sport rather than intellectual skills enjoyed priority. Their more immediate goals consisted in preparing their children for public examinations for the higher public schools – the Educational Institute for girls, and the Pedro II or the Military Schools

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<sup>102</sup> See chapter 2 of this thesis for the distinctions between *namorado*, dates or boy friends.

<sup>103</sup> After Lasilha Luiz Carlos Brito's novel *Orãos de Pais Vivos* (first published in *O Cruzeiro* as a serial before being lauched as a book). This relates the story of the problems brought about by the separation of the parents, at that time a more problematic situation, since divorce would only be legalised in 1977 in Brazil.

<sup>104</sup> CORÇÃO, *ibid.*

for the boys. These schools were in the first rank of educational institutions and their former pupils successfully passed examinations either for military academies, for the university or the official banks. The girls completed their courses at the Educational Institute as teachers for primary schools – a good part time job they could easily keep after marriage. And as they started their careers in distant suburbs – where some military institutions were also located – marrying junior officers could be their possible happy ending.

JK's government also provided an opportunity for those who aspired to upward mobility, and for the absorption of different groups into the upper middle class. Such groups differed through the manipulation of different forms of social capital,<sup>105</sup> signs of status and different patterns of consumption. These opportunities presented a rupture with previous class values, and these social actors increasingly become the mediators for their idiosyncratic experiences and the ordination of family relationships, originating what Servulo Figueira calls "the socially un-mapped"<sup>106</sup> family." where there are many idiosyncratic ideals in conflict." For him, in this family there are no clear rules about "what is allowed and not; what is right and wrong; what is good and evil. Persons are bound to act according to their desires, fantasies, impulses and moment." The problem of the 'un-mapped family' – derived from the fact of being at the same time an environment where a member can only be orientated by this kind of [idiosyncratic] identity; and a situation which bars the production and stability of this very identity."<sup>107</sup>

Thus, the accelerated modernisation of both the family and society brought as consequence a demand for new 'social maps' to adjust family relationships. And this new orientation would come from Psychology. The language, concepts of psychology were popularised through the mass media and started to be discussed and incorporated into the middle to upper class culture in 1950s.<sup>108</sup> As Sérvulo Figueira pointed out: "at the same time, and paradoxically, the popularisation of Psychology, as language, culture and ideology, which historically emerged with the process of modernisation, contributes in its turn to the increasing of the same process."<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> For instance those who Gilberto Velho called 'an aristocracy of the middle strata'.

<sup>106</sup> Contrary to what can be suggested by this metaphor, un-mapping [*desmapeamento*] is not the absence of order, form or map [ that is direction] rather the presence of contradictory orders, forms and maps' [ for family life] which had been internalised by the individual in different moments of life. FIGUEIRA, 1981.

<sup>107</sup> FIGUEIRA, 1981.

<sup>108</sup> Sérvulo Figueira dates the 'psychologisation' of family from the 1970s after "the intense and extensive diffusion of psychoanalysis through the media." However, this process seems to have inaugurated in the 1950s when words such as trauma and complex became popular and started to permeate discussions about child education. Debates about physical punishment and its consequences, and the idea that parents had to be responsible not only for the physical but also for mental health of the children were already present in 1950s magazines.

<sup>109</sup> FIGUEIRA, 1985:145.

## 'Café Society'

A new upper class had emerged with the industrialisation process, represented mainly by industrialists, bankers and entrepreneurs – the so called 'productive class'; and also by the 'nouveaux riches' raised from 'big business', state speculation and inflation.<sup>110</sup> Contrary to the traditional upper class which had the family as its social capital, wealth was the main capital of the new elite and the café-society was its visible aspect. Showing off seemed to be their motto – unlike the restraint which led to the near invisibility of the first.<sup>111</sup>

This new upper class also produced a special type of journalist: 'the social columnist,' who only made a living from reporting on their parties, houses and wealthy lifestyle.<sup>112</sup> Contrary to the near obscurity of the earlier social columns (the 'Society' ones),<sup>113</sup> the new columns were dominated by photographs, descriptions of women's dresses and their lifestyle. These reports were not restricted to columns; rather they expanded to several lavishly illustrated pages in the magazines. The social columnist's job culminated in creating 'lists': the ten most elegant women,<sup>114</sup> most stylish men, (most elegant) mother of the year; and eventually, the most relevant bachelors<sup>115</sup>; or the best hostesses.<sup>116</sup> Names were repeated in such lists with enduring regularity, building up 'the Olympians' of mass culture and thus transforming them into celebrities among the readers of national

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<sup>110</sup> AZEVEDO, 196:16.

<sup>111</sup> Showing off seems to be essential in projects of upward mobility for some emergent groups, individuals or families. They have to prove that they had the means to be part of society's upper echelons. Paradoxically from this ostentatious consumption that also comes the label of 'nouveaux riches', hence stressing their differences with the traditional elite. An analysis of this process or the relationship between the two segments goes beyond the scope of this thesis.

<sup>112</sup> At the beginning of the decade two journalists, Ibrahim Sued and Jacinto de Thormes, started to publish a list of the 'Ten Most Elegant Women of the Year,' the publicity given to the lifestyle of the so called 'café society' would mark the decade. According to a report, Café Society was an expression invented by an American columnist called Maury Paul to characterise a group of people who have or could come to have some prominence in the mundane, artistic or business domains." *Revista da Semana* 40:22, 10/10 1955

<sup>113</sup> Newspapers and magazines had always had a social column – a kind of 'notice-board' for upper class' events – weddings, christenings, banquets, parties. However, such columns were hardly noticeable for the public at large; since they were printed in small type and without photographs they were almost reduced to a brief description of the place followed by the names of some of the participants.<sup>113</sup> It is reasonable to suggest that only those who had been there and their peer groups would read them. However, such limited publicity had no importance since they were destined for those 'who really counted'. As the position of the upper classes was already well established there was no need to display their status symbols to the public in general. As a rule the elite only engage in dialogue with the small minority of their equals. These included the traditional families, the landed gentry with lasting wealth, honourable surnames, codes and signs of status synthesised in the word '*berço*' (literally cradle – meaning good origin). 'Having *berço*' meant to have been born into a traditional (or a respectable) family – which constituted the most important social capital, manipulated even for their impoverished members. They cultivated tradition, elegance and restraint. Sobriety as a rule had to command every domain of their lives, and such virtues were inculcated in women in traditional and exclusive French convent boarding schools. They were the 'society' distinct from the new 'café society.' Ibrahim Sued, one of the more distinguished 'social columnists promised to explain later the two 'I' in a detailed report.' *Manchete*, 24, 1957:71.

<sup>114</sup> They were published annually in *O Cruzeiro* and *Manchete*.

<sup>115</sup> *Manchete* 259: 49-53, 6/4/1957.

<sup>116</sup> *Manchete* 24, 1957: 71-74.

newspapers and magazine<sup>117</sup> This upper class was concentrated in Rio and São Paulo, the poles of industrial and financial development, consolidated as the diffusion centres of fashion, customs and modernity by those lists.

*Elegant women from other places could barely compete with the ladies from Rio or São Paulo society, for they enjoyed more resources, travelled frequently to Paris and were compelled to buy a different dress for each party, held almost daily in those two cities [...]*<sup>118</sup>

However, those lists were widely imitated for the local elite all over the country. Only at the end of the decade could people from other states be chosen for the national lists.

The cosmopolitan character of their lives was very much valued irrespective of the label of 'nouveaux riches' imposed by the traditional upper classes, with all its implicit pejorative connotations. Marks of distinction stressed by the columnists were the journeys they made, the 'griffe' of their clothes and also (for a few) their relationship with internationally famous people<sup>119</sup> – Hollywood stars or playboys such as Ali Khan and Porfirio Rubirosa. Ibrahim Sued explained what being part of that group meant.

*[E]ntering in that universe is also (or mainly) to have the duty of reciprocity, exchanging invitations. It means worrying about one's elegance, paying more attention to hats and little details like that. Things which many people label as simple frivolity. Instead, for others, it represents being in evidence and close to power.*<sup>120</sup>

The public in general held the idea that these classes were moved by extreme vanity. Suspicions surrounded the requirements for being chosen by the columnists as one of the most elegant of the year. Speculation about huge amounts of money paid were rife. And questions were raised about moral standards both in business or in family life of the café-society.<sup>121</sup> They considered their 'easy money' rooted in speculation or in suspicious business rather than in 'honest and hard work', and there were rumours about their lack of punctuality in paying bills. For the public this explained why their money was so easily

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<sup>117</sup> MORIN (1969 :111-115) calls them 'The New Olympians' of mass culture.

<sup>118</sup> *Manchete* 39, 17/1/1953:29.

<sup>119</sup> A columnist listed some status symbols for this group: the apogee would be reached by marrying Princess Margaret. *O Cruzeiro*, 2 7/1955:26-1

<sup>120</sup> *Manchete*, 24/1957: 74. Pierre Bourdieu suggests that all these issues – etiquette, fashion, balls, charity parties, which are labelled as 'mundanities' – far from being only manifestations of upper classes' idleness, or as the vain ostentatious consumerism of millionaires, they should be regarded as a specific kind of work, which presupposes an investment of time, money and particular competence. The objective of such 'frivolities' is to secure the reproduction or the enlargement of the families' social capital. (BOURDIEU, 1985:45) An analogy with the role played by social rites, fashion and etiquette in the Victorian society can also be suggested (DAVIDOFF, 1986); for the analysis of a similar role played by the Brazilian saloons at the turn of the century see NEEDEL, 1987.

<sup>121</sup> It can be suggested that the choice of 'the most elegant mother of the year' among mothers of large families of six, seven children as a way to stress the domestic qualities of those women.



spent. Another source of scandal was their liberality in moral issues. The '*gente bem*'<sup>122</sup> counted among its members the '*desquitados*'<sup>123</sup> and couples not legally married and otherwise stigmatised people, whom the traditional society, and the virtuous middle classes, boasted they would never host.

Furthermore this elite provided models of an idle lifestyle and of the exaggerated importance paid to luxury and fashion for middle-class families. This was an Olympus closer to their lives and imagination than Hollywood could ever be. To gain access to that world there were ways other than working and studying; a beauty contest award was supposed to 'open the doors' to this possibility, being a path towards hypergamous alliances.

Thus, middle-class families could invest in the beauty, elegance and glamour of their daughters as a substitute for other social capital. However, seldom would a beauty contest bring the opportunity of marrying into the traditional elite, in the conventional way. More probably it would happen through union to a '*desquitado*',<sup>124</sup> an anomalous and stigmatised situation. Even these cases were not frequent, and as a rule parents barely succeeded in this kind of social investment. According to a report, the career of those girls usually proceeded from beauty contests to elegant prostitution, and they ended as 'call girls'.<sup>125</sup> Normative literature condemned this lifestyle regretting the bad examples they gave to the young people. The complementary side of Café-Society was the '*juventude transviada*' – the 'rebels without a cause'.<sup>126</sup>

## *'Juventude Transviada'*

The initial mark of the 'modern' youth question was the tumult provoked by young groups from the middle to upper classes<sup>127</sup> during the preview of the film *Rock Around the Clock* in Rio and São Paulo in December 1956. The public broke the chairs and destroyed everything in its way, clapping hands and dancing in the manner they saw in the movie, until

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<sup>122</sup> This expression came from the Argentine '*gente bien*' the name given for its landed gentry, who live according to a strict moral code whose violation meant social banishment. Contrary to it in Brazil this term was more used to make the distinction between those who had become rich during the years of the civil dictatorship (1930-1945) and the traditional wealthy families. In reality the expression was popularised in Brazil as a synonymous of the members of the café society and they were not so morally strict. *O Cruzeiro*, 2 /7/1955:26-1

<sup>123</sup> '*Desquite*' was a kind of divorce which did not allow a second marriage.

<sup>124</sup> It is the story of several winners of the Miss Brazil contest in the 1950s, such as Martha Rocha, Adalgiza Colombo, Terezinha Morango who married men from the upper class who were '*desquitados*'. Their marriages were widely reported in the magazines of that time.

<sup>125</sup> '*Cocktail-girl. ... Call-girl.*' *Manchete* 7 (371): 79-80; 30/5/1959.

<sup>126</sup> Literally 'deviant youth'

<sup>127</sup> Daniel Linguanoto, "Moço Rico Paga 50 Mil Para Divertir-se Perigosamente," *Manchete* 5 (307):70-73, "De Lambreta em Busca do Tempo Perdido," *Manchete* 329:32-37; 8 /8/1958; Janio de Freitas, "Blue Jeans, Blusa Vermelha, Gente Moça, Futuro Sombrio," *Manchete* (252): 8-17, 16/2/1957; "Os Transviados da Última Esquina," *Manchete* (331):29-39, 23 /8/1958.

the police came to break up the disorder. The audience in fact only repeated a phenomenon which had happened in other countries, and was emphasised in the publicity for the film. From 1957 onwards rock 'n' roll was very closely associated with the youth rebellion, provoking reaction from parents, police and authorities in general. A judge in São Paulo prohibited the film for those under 18 years, declaring that the "music was exciting, but the dance was very immoral, bringing an evil influence and moral injury to young people." He suggested that the radios should not broadcast such rhythm until "this uncontrolled youth had had its psychological equilibrium restored."<sup>128</sup>

There had always been problematic children from the elite. To break the law represented for them a way of displaying their parent's social power. They were regarded just as individual deviant cases. However, in the 1950s they became a social category, "an identity: a past, a story, a childhood, a reputation, a lifestyle" to paraphrase Foucault's description of the homosexual in the Victorian age.<sup>129</sup> Adolescents had always had a tendency to gather in bars and parties for sexual activities. As they were few and wore plain clothes the press did not pay much attention to them. But in the second half of the decade they had adopted a uniform, models to follow and a context in which to insert their non conformist attitudes. They started to wear leather jackets, multicoloured shirts,<sup>130</sup> and blue jeans— not considered as suitable for male clothing – trying to emulate both Marlon Brando (in *The Savage*) and James Dean. Girls wore brightly coloured socks, multi-chequed skirts and masculine white shoes. Their hair – large forelock for boys – was 'carefully' uncombed. As motorcycles were out of reach for the majority of them, the Italian 'lambreta,' an imported motor scooter, was elected as their symbol.<sup>131</sup> Those signs marked the difference between them and the predecessors.

In general newspapers and magazines regretted the importation of bad habits, the substitution of Brazilian moral values for American culture. The consequences for both the upper and the new middle-classes were consumerism, a shift in the standards of honour and changes in the patterns of gender roles.

*By imitating foreign models exported by American propaganda, Brazilian youngsters are clinging body and soul to the emptiness. The marks of this emptiness are external and internal to them.*<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> 'Relógio do rock marca 40 anos de balanço' *O Estado de São Paulo* 9 (2632): D1 and D2, 24/4/ 1994.

<sup>129</sup> FOUCAULT, 1979:43

<sup>130</sup> At the end of the decade, the public was scandalised when red shirts becoming fashionable for men. They were regarded as an excessive sign of modernity and refusal of imposed values, and were identified with the '*juventude transviada*.' The title of a report about the youth's question was: '*Blue jeans, Blusa Vermelha, Gente Moça, Futuro Sombrio*' literally 'Blue Jeans, Red Shirt, Young People, a Shadowy Future [Without Perspectives].' *O Cruzeiro* (252) 16/2/1957.

<sup>131</sup> Although the lambretas were cheaper than motorcycles, they were still very expensive, out of reach for the average middle-class families. Lambretas were a sign of status, generally associated to the '*filhos do papa*'.

<sup>132</sup> Janio de Freitas *ibid*.

The external mark was their uniform which 'contaminated' their spirit. Thus the journalist made reference to their "blue jeans soul" and regretted that even love had been 'bluejeanized.' To describe the bad character of the judge Souza Neto,<sup>133</sup> David Nasser described him as "man who even wore blue-jeans."<sup>134</sup>

Authorities also blamed the changes in society for the 'disorientation' of teenagers. Janio de Freitas pointed out the changes in the patriarchal society as part of the male adolescent's sexual problem:

*Brazilian young men first had to change the slaves for the servants as their sexual object. When the servants also gained more awareness of their human condition, they were forced to look for prostitutes. Now they are going to the over sexual affinity with their own colleagues – their friends from the same social condition, the same school, the same social background, the same social group...*<sup>135</sup>

The scandalised journalist believed that such behaviour was already a norm in Europe as a "consequence of a process which has been going on for several generations." He doubted that Brazilian teenagers had the 'necessary maturity'(sic) to deal with the question. This was an irrefutable argument since the polarity between 'good' and 'bad' girls was very strong; and disseminated across society.<sup>136</sup> There was a visible distinction between those selected 'to marry and to become the mother of children'; and the 'others good only for fun'. The journalist did not put into question the norms behind such distinctions, taking for granted the 'right' of males to take as 'compulsory' partners the girls at the service of their families. Whereas he seemed to regard with tolerance free sex with lower class girls, it is considered a serious social issue when it happens in their peer group.

Authorities in general agreed that what they regarded a disintegration of the family was at the root of the problems. David Nasser's article '*Filhinhos de Papai*'<sup>137</sup> exemplifies this opinion. He draws a picture of what had become a family in the affluent classes, stressing the responsibility of upper-class wives and mothers for such situation: a time spent all by themselves, as if husband, wife and children lived separate lives.<sup>138</sup> He denounced the breaking of domestic patterns and of the standards of honour and shame;<sup>139</sup> the loss of domestic cares or worries about child rearing; the rise of adultery, card playing sometimes

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<sup>133</sup> The judge who pronounced the murderers of Aída Cúri not guilty, see page 71.

<sup>134</sup> Davi Nasser, '*Livrar o Brasil dos Pequenos e Grandes Canalhas*,' *Cruzeiro*:102, 13/2/ 1960.

<sup>135</sup> Janio de Freitas *ibid.*:10

<sup>136</sup> See Chapter 2 of this thesis.

<sup>137</sup> '*Filhinho do Papai*' *O Cruzeiro*:116-117, 9/8/ 1958.

<sup>138</sup> I do not wish to discuss here possible differences of moral standards or the ideal of domesticity among different social classes, since these are not central to the argument. The magazines had the middle-class public as their targets, and they evaluated upper class behaviour according to middle-class standards.

<sup>139</sup> See Chapter 2 of this thesis.

losing huge amounts of money, as a favourite pastime,<sup>140</sup> a life lived in the night with almost daily social compromises. Reports in magazines had headlines such as these:

*Youngsters left all by themselves. Parents neglect them, and do not care for their education;*

*A Playboy's confession to the police: Why should I behave myself, if no one in my group has any sense of decency? For instance, my mother got her third husband this year. She is still invited by the best families, and everybody finds it 'very natural.'<sup>141</sup>*

David Nasser also emphasised the negative side of the male role – the cult of violence and war learnt through Hollywood films; the near obligation to seduce any girl to prove their masculinity. Thus the journalist asked

*What could a child become after growing up in such impure environment? What kind of expectation could one have from those children 'fertilised' by such examples, stimulated by those immoral scenes, put against the world by the dirty universe of their home?<sup>142</sup>*

In spite of his understanding of the causes, Nasser did not show compassion for the 'filhinhos do papai'. He even advocated self administration of justice against those young men's conviction of impunity – a conviction born from their parents prestige and social relationships.

In Nasser's view another bad symptom of these changes was the great popularity of beauty contests – paradoxically, promoted by the same magazine where he wrote his polemics. The mere idea of 'family girls' being exhibited, aggravated by their parading on swim-suits, was a deep break in the standards of women's modesty. Nasser regretted the parental connivance with the 'dangers of modern lifestyle' and summarises his reasoning with sarcasm:

*I'm sadly remembering the phone call I have just received. Someone was inviting me to attend the contest where his daughter would be running for 'the most beautiful bust of 1958.'<sup>143</sup>*

David Nasser's arguments associated wealth with vice, poverty with integrity. He condemns the ideal of upward mobility and the means used. In contrast to Nasser, who chiefly blamed mothers, Gustavo Corção, a conservative Catholic philosopher and journalist, emphasised the responsibility of fathers and the shift in the patterns of male honour. As will be shown later in this thesis, male honour was evaluated in two ways: in the

<sup>140</sup> Playing cards as an upper class feminine entertainment, leading to adultery is a common plot in Emy Bulhoes de Carvalho's novels. She was a popular Brazilian author in the 1950s and several of her novels were serialised in *O Cruzeiro*.

<sup>141</sup> Daniel Linguanoto, *Manchete*, (195): 70. At that time, 'good families' were not expected to receive a 'desquitada' person at their homes.

<sup>142</sup> *Filhinho do Papai*. *O Cruzeiro* *ibid*.

<sup>143</sup> David Nasser, '*Por Uma Menina Viva*.'

behaviour of women in his family and for his business ethic.<sup>144</sup> Gustavo Corção regarded the 'ideology of favour' as a shift in this later pattern.<sup>145</sup> To him, fathers gave a bad example to their children every time they gained advantages through practices such as '*pistolão*', '*panelinha*', '*cabide de empregos*'.<sup>146</sup> Corção considered as intrinsically pernicious the life of those families whose *pater familias* earn huge salaries from a job secured by means of a *pistolão*.<sup>147</sup> and condemned those 'good Catholic families'

*who live according to the 'credo' of ostentatious consumption; who favour people for the car they own, rather than by their moral virtues; who shamelessly practice nepotism; who barefacedly take their comfort from the adversity and the misery of the poor. By their word and example, they teach their children the religion of status, success and prestige. And after doing all of this, they punctually attend Sunday Mass.*<sup>148</sup>

Authorities also blamed 'modern education' – a model imported from the United States.<sup>149</sup> as a cause for the '*juventude transviada*'. They regarded the questioning of corporal punishment, and general permissiveness in education by fear of traumas and complexes as the causes of the 'social chaos' among young people. A reporter speaking about petty offences made by young playboys claimed: "A good caning would teach them a thing or two."<sup>150</sup>

The Youth life-style implied scandal to the public. Gangs cherished those who dared to challenge values, norms and traditions, it was credited to be necessary to inflict damages worth 50.000 cruzeiros to become member of a gang. But the worst of all was seducing young girls arriving from the suburbs. The '*Curra*' (multiple rape) was the culmination of such offences.

One particular event encapsulates many of the themes discussed above – a crime which can be taken as a drama, in Victor Turner's sense,<sup>151</sup> that is, an event of daily life which is displaced to illuminate attributes and values which usually remains hidden. This

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<sup>144</sup> See Chapter 2 of this thesis.

<sup>145</sup> It seems that he had a personal motive behind his considerations. He compares his wages as an experienced lecturer with those earned by a nephew of the President's wife, a 20 years old law student, who was earning 'fourteen times more than an experienced lecturer. He mentions it in his interview to the *Revista da Semana*, and later in one of his books.

<sup>146</sup> '*Pistolão*': It is an informal way to abbreviate or annihilate bureaucratic or legal dispositions. To have a '*pistolão*' means to be acquainted to someone who either is in a high bureaucratic position or can intervene with a request to break the official or legal apparatus. The word means both the act of intermediates and the person who does it. '*Panelinha*': It is a closed group of persons who **co-operate** to obtain the best of advantages for its members. It also includes manoeuvres to guarantee a rotation among them to occupy the highest positions of power, thus assuring the maintenance of their privileges. For an analysis of '*panelinha*', '*cabide de empregos*' and '*pistolão*' see LEEDS, 1964, 1978. An analysis of the ideology which support those practices can be seen in, '*Voce Sabe Com Quem Está Falando*.' in DAMATTA, 1978.

<sup>147</sup> *Revista da Semana* ibid. p 9.

<sup>148</sup> *Revista da Semana* ibid. p 9.

<sup>149</sup> Daniel Linguanoto 1958 p 36.

<sup>150</sup> Daniel Linguanoto 1958 p 72.

<sup>151</sup> TURNER, 1974.

event turned out to be the most famous crime of the decade, and it epitomises the problems of a changing society. It helps to make visible the contradictions between two different models of feminine behaviour; the tension between tradition and modernity, making also possible to capture the dreams and aspirations of the middle classes at this time, and the paradoxes, perplexities and ambiguities of the Brazilian situation.

In July 1958 a young girl called Aída Cúri fell or was thrown, from the roof terrace of a high building on the impressive *Nossa Senhora de Copacabana Avenue*. Apart from her, there were three men on the roof — two young men and the humble older porter of the building.

On the terrace Aida Curi strongly resisted the attempt of a multiple rape and finally fell from the roof. At first it was not clear if she committed suicide or was murdered by them. The medical report certified the ill-treatment she suffered, which was taken as a sign of her struggle to defend her virginity. 'The Crime of a Lost Generation,' (as it was called) mobilised public opinion and is still listed today as one the great crimes of the century.<sup>152</sup>

It epitomised all the problems young people faced in that decade. Aída Cúri was a virgin, and was at once compared to Maria Goretti,<sup>153</sup> for those who favoured the version that she had committed suicide. The account given by the reporters of how she suddenly came across one of the young men is very much like the meeting of 'Little Red Riding Hood' with the 'Wolf.'<sup>154</sup> The young men fitted the stereotype of the transgressive male youth: they were bad students, had a history of petty criminal offences and '*filhinhos do papai*,' sure of their impunity because of their economic and/or social capital.

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<sup>152</sup> The story of the crime was published as a novel in photographs, by a magazine which usually published romantic novels in the same way. They claimed " an educational purpose: to keep alive the memory of a girl, like many others of the same age, whose destiny had been to become a martyr." (Vida e Morte de Aída Cúri, *Sétimo Céu*, extra [1959]). magazines conducted 'simulated trials of the murder' ('O Povo Pede a Pena Máxima' *O Cruzeiro*, 2/2/60:4-5). And even children used to play a game called ' the trial of Aída Cúri.'

<sup>153</sup> Henrique Pongetti *ibid.* For the story of Maria Goretti see chapter 2. As a subtle way of associating the two characters, Aída Cúri and Maria Goretti, a few months later *O Cruzeiro* published an account made by Alexander Serenelli, the man who murdered Maria Goretti. It was called 'Eu Matei uma Santa' (I killed a saint). *O Cruzeiro*, 31 (6) :104-108, 22/11/1958.

<sup>154</sup> Fairy tales have been analysed as metaphors of human dramas by psychoanalysts such as Bruno Bettelheim and Marie Louise von Franz. Perrault's version of the tale of '*Red Hiding Hood*,' ends with a little poem in which the moral lesson for girls is explicit, the lesson that Aída Cúri failed to taken in account: "that pretty young girls should not pay attention to every one they meet. If they do so, it is little wonder if a wolf captures and devours them. There are several types of wolves, but the worst are the charming ones who follow little girls by the streets, and even towards their houses. BETTLHEIM, 1979:204) For CHAUI, (1984:34) *Little Red Hiding Hood* exemplifies what she calls 'return tales' (which assures to the children the return to home and to parent's love) In those tales 'sexuality is represented as dangerous and must be avoided because children are not still prepared. Neither are single girls in societies ruled by the complex of honour and shame see chapter....). Contrary to these interpretations DARTON (1986) considers psychoanalytic interpretations of fairy tales as a late interpretation, which does not taken into account the context in which those tales had been produced and recounted. It is possible that those interpretations could not be regarded as mutually exclusive at all since one takes early versions trying to expose their origins and original meaning among peasants, the other speaks about moralist later versions (such as Perrault,'s) destined for aristocrats, whose permanence could possibly be explained for being metaphorical of human dramas.

Among the three men, one was under the legal age, so he could not be incriminated<sup>155</sup> the porter of the building was considered by the public just 'a *pobre coitado*'<sup>156</sup> someone who was there as mere voyeur and probably would be the scapegoat. And there was Ronaldo, the elder playboy who had invited Aida to go there, and who was considered the murderer. People suspected that for being he a '*filhinho do papai*,' he would not be found guilty. Newspapers reported that suspicions and accusations of bribery were rife. Thus, probably the jury would give to the porter no more than few years in prison, and everything would soon be forgotten.

In fact, in spite of the public uproar, the judge who should have approved the proof of the crime did not accept the guilt of Ronaldo. The headlines of the newspapers warrant attention: [It is] '*Better throw Justice to Litter Bins...*' '*Sexual Hyenas are Thereupon Free!*', or: '*For Mothers, Bats Can Look Like Angels!*' (as an answer to the murderer's mothers, who claimed their innocence). Such was the public out cry, that the Superior Court of Justice revoked his decision.<sup>157</sup>

Why did the case arouse such public interest to the point that it was declared – "The corpse of Aída Cúri remained a scarecrow frightening the bourgeoisie in their morality for decades."<sup>158</sup> Women had been raped and murdered very often. However, multiple rape seems to be a particular phenomenon of the 1950s in Brazil, so that "*curra*," the word used to name it then, become old-fashioned today. Why in that context did this particular form of violence against woman, involving gangs of youngsters, become so frequent? What sort of feelings does society express through this kind of violence, remains as a question.

Such practices were deemed a by-product of progress and modernisation. They were the visible face of the changes in society bringing insecurity to the public at large who perceived the whole process as disruptive and feared its consequences for their traditional way of life.

Looking at the reports written about the *Juventude Transviada*, it becomes clear that, in spite of their condemnation, newspapers and magazines actually helped to spread those 'new' models of behaviour for young people across the whole country: new fashion, their rebellion, their challenge of values, their cult of speed which put at risk their lives and the lives of others.

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<sup>155</sup> 18 years old in Brazil.

<sup>156</sup> A poor soul.

<sup>157</sup> Aída Cúri's murder inspired at once journalist David Nasser to write three articles pointing out 'the youth problem'. Later, when the judge did not accept the guilt of Ronaldo, he mobilised a huge campaign against him calling for justice.. Such was his ardour that many people labelled the campaign a kind of 'necrophilia.'

<sup>158</sup> Carlos Heitor Cony, *Manchete*:47. 1992.

To counterbalance the negative influence of the 'rebels without a cause' magazines decided to present the other side of *Copacabana's* youth epitomised by the so called 'rapazes da Miguel Lemos' (Miguel Lemos St. lads) regarded as 'the healthy side of the youth' in Rio.<sup>159</sup> According to a magazine, *Miguel Lemos* was a street without 'lambretas' and rock 'n' roll.<sup>160</sup> Its lads were fond of playing football on the beach (*pelada*<sup>161</sup>), chatting at the local 'botequim',<sup>162</sup> and promoting carnival dances on the street, considered as a familiar environment, thus 'proper' for 'family girls'.

The dichotomy between small towns and big cities as respectively cities of virtue and vice was very much presented in the same report. The street was presented as a 'calico street' in a 'black tie city'. *Chita* (calico) is represented as a very humble fabric favoured by peasants or people from the countryside. The stress put in their pastimes – peladas and botequins – also has the same connotation of tradition and friendliness, and emphasised the good character of the members of that group: Unlike the petty offences of the *juventude transviada's* against the weak, their leader was a disabled young man, named Cristiano.

## Conclusion

There are many possible readings of the Brazilian context in the 1950s. Depending on the focus there are key words, characters or institutions which came to mind: Vargas, JK, Lacerda, but also David Nasser, Aída Cúri, Brazilian Radio, or Hollywood stars among the Olympians popularised through *O Cruzeiro* and *Manchete*. From the rise of the new bourgeoisie and the emulation of new lifestyles came *Café Society*; *The Ten Most Elegant Women* but also *The Juventude Transviada*.

Despite the condemnation by the Church, the Brazilian family was taking a new shape with the advent of birth control; women on paid work, and in higher education. However, the pejorative labels given to women who became visible in the public space warrant particular attention: the 'ill-loved' middle-class supporters of Carlos Lacerda or 'the monkey fans' of radio stars. By contrast, the 'Little bees' – was the praiseworthy name given to the members of a feminine club which met to exchange recipes and embroidering patterns and to discuss other domestic issues.<sup>163</sup> Their writings reveal a veneration of their leader similar to the devotion of fan club members to their idols. In the latter case, however,

<sup>159</sup> For instance, 'A Rua da Lambreta Esquecida,' *Manchete* 327: 90-96; 26/7/ 1958.

<sup>160</sup> However, the magazine also put out that one of its members, Carlos Imperial, had been invited to play a part in a film for his talent as a rock'n'roller. *Manchete*, *ibid.* Later he became famous as rock composer

<sup>161</sup> It is the informal way of playing football, very popular in the countryside, suburbs and also on the beaches.

<sup>162</sup> Botequim is a kind of tavern, as a place for the gathering of local men it is analogous to the pub.

<sup>163</sup> They called their leader 'The Queen Bee' and the club 'Our Hive'. See OLIVEIRA SILVA, 1990.



attention was restricted to domestic affairs and their action was praised rather than derided.<sup>164</sup>

The 1950s were also the decade of industrialisation, progress, modernisation; a period of a Plan of Targets, the slogan 'Fifty years in Five', of a new word 'Developmentism' to encompass the ideology and the action which would build up a new modern country. It was the time of the inauguration of TV; the popularisation of electric appliances, Brasilia, a *March Towards the West*, of new roads crossing the country.

Brazil jumped towards a promising new future through ISEB's reflections; a professional theatre and films. A representative part of that new country – more intellectual, cosmopolitan, made their voice and feelings known by means of *Bossa Nova* and *Cinema Novo*. But intellectuals deeply regretted the public's lack of education which made them favour Radio soap operas, *Chanchadas*, and vaudeville. The majority watched the patterns of good taste being shaken – Modern Art which looked like a child's paintings;' modern poetry without rhymes or metre ; modern pedagogic theories challenging old practices such as spanking or caning naughty children;<sup>165</sup>

Finally the 1950s was a time of progress and modernisation entailed in old practices. The élite invented new ways of exercising their old political practices such as 'compadrio' and 'pistolão', producing 'panelinhas', 'cabides de emprego'; inflating the State to become 'the great employer.'

This context sets the background for understanding the making of the modern Brazilian middle class woman. In that vast and unequal country some of these features were only vicariously lived — even by the middle classes. However national magazines helped to spread new patterns of consumption, fashion and life-style all over the country. These models would be gradually assimilated and then adopted everywhere. Such assimilation and adoption depended on the attachment (or not) of groups to the traditional cultural features set up by religious models and pattern of honour, which constrained women's behaviour.

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<sup>164</sup>. This does not mean that things always ran smoothly for the Little Bees: they also encountered problems at home when too involved in Club affairs. This is why a reader praised the suggestions about how to deal with obstinate husbands – that is those who did not agree to their wives' participation. In the picturesque language of the Club she wrote: "no husband can resist agreeing to his little bee freely producing the delicious honey she makes in Our Dear Hive." OLIVEIRA SILVA, 1990: 152.

<sup>165</sup> See chapter 8.

## Chapter 2

# *The Ideological Roots of Female Sexuality and Domesticity.*

## *Introduction*

This chapter outlines some ideological issues which informed the discursive construction of sexuality and domesticity in Brazil. It will firstly deal with the vocabulary of honour and shame with examples taken from the Brazilian literature. Then it will examine the process of courtship since it provides the grounds on which the code of honour and the ideology of woman and sexuality are actually experienced. The way in which the etiquette of *namoro*<sup>1</sup> contributed to the apprenticeship of the girl's future role as housewife will also be described.<sup>2</sup>

It is important to stress that these ideologies are encompassed by Catholic doctrine, not only the 'official' one, but also a corpus of popular beliefs, legends, songs - most of which were inherited from European medieval times<sup>3</sup> - plus feminine models provided by the Catholic pantheon of saints and pious women.

What individuals of specific and delimited groups 'actually' did was based on a complex negotiation within micro level contacts. This chapter will examine a system of rules and tacit agreements that provided the context for this and for an understanding the discourse of the religious manuals and the mass media of the period.

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<sup>1</sup> The process of courtship is called *namoro* and the boy- and girl-friends are respectively called *namorado* and *namorada*. Although the analyst had pointed out the differences between this process and others such as the US American dating, boy- and girl-friend are also used as synonyms for *namorado* and *namorada*.

<sup>2</sup> It is based in Thales de Azevedo's studies, with examples taken from Brazilian literature of the period. My own background also provides empirical evidence about this matter.

<sup>3</sup> Eleanor Commo McLaughlin points out that the medieval world produced not only a high theology but also a rich and variegated popular piety recorded in sermon, the lives of saints, Mary's legend, songs and dramas. We have inherited the patriarch's accounts as reinterpreted in the medieval age. Those popular beliefs, unarticulated assumptions and prejudices, however mysteriously passed on through the generations, are still present in popular culture. This also is true for the countries of the 'New World', as an inheritance from their European coloniser. MCLAUGHLIN, 1979:214.

## *Woman and Sexuality in Catholic Ideology*

The history of Catholic doctrine shows how the misogynist convictions of the early fathers constructed attitudes towards sex and woman, which still prevail in the twentieth century, and give evidence of the contradictions at the core of that doctrine. Since earlier times, theologians made hatred of sex equal hatred of woman, whilst they also had higher praise for feminine virginity whose paragon was the Virgin Mary.

Christianity provided the world with two powerful feminine images – Eve and Mary – which thus underpinned woman's dual role. Eve is identified with nature, the profane and the imperfect; whilst Mary represents transcendence, the sacred and wholeness.<sup>4</sup> This opposition also translates the conflicts at the root of Christian doctrine in the image of women; the antagonism between heaven and earth, flesh and spirit. The Church had a long-lasting tradition of despising “the things of the world,” “the pleasures of the flesh,” “the evils of sex” and “women as the daughters of Eve.” By contrast, they highly praised “the things of God.” “sacrifice and self denial,” “chastity and virginity” and worshipped Mary – who had been spared from every hardship of human condition– as the impossible perfect ideal of womanhood.<sup>5</sup> If Mary is the unattainable ideal, the only possible paradigm for women had to be Eve.

### *Eve*

The Fathers of the Church<sup>6</sup> in general found in Genesis, in the way woman had been created, as in her participation in the Fall, a fundamental support for their convictions against woman: God gave the more honourable role to man, by creating him in the first place;<sup>7</sup> woman was inferior to man, because she was just a part of him, and she should even be ashamed to think of her nature.<sup>8</sup> The passage of Genesis that clearly states that humankind, as a whole had been created in 'the image and likeness of God' , seems to have been ignored.

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<sup>4</sup> *The religious myth of the Christian West insists that Eve, the innovator, can lead her followers only to evil: Mary, the passive, submissive, obedient woman, is urged as the model and goal of women who aspire to the acceptance and appreciation of their families and communities.* MILES, 1987:2.

<sup>5</sup> ARMSTRONG, 1986:11.

<sup>6</sup> III and IV centuries A.D.

<sup>7</sup> John Chrysostom (347-407)

<sup>8</sup> DALY, 1968:46 ; RUETHER, 1979:158.

<sup>9</sup> Ambrosiaster. Quoted in DALY, 1968:46. Ambrosiaster is a commentary on St. Paul's epistles long attributed to St. Ambrose. Erasmus in 1527 threw doubt on the accuracy of this ascription. The author is usually spoken of as Ambrosiaster or pseudo-Ambrose.

Thomas Aquinas, considered the great doctor of the Catholic Church determined that woman's punishment was more grave, because she suffered an aggravation of her natural state of subordination: she became subject to male domination, her role in generation was transformed into a painful burden. Besides, when sterile, the pain is substituted by the opprobrium brought on woman who did not fulfil her 'natural purpose'. Man as the headmaster had to provide bread by the sweat of his brow. And these burden came as an addition to the principal punishment, that is mortality.<sup>10</sup>

## *Virgin Mary*

The cult of Virgin Mary has deep influence over the constitution of the feminine role – an influence yet more profound in countries where Catholicism is the dominant religion. However, for Catholic theologians, what makes the Virgin Mary the ideal of womanhood is her difference from all other woman: in her birth, life, childbirth and death. She was protected against sin, free from the burden of menstruation, the pains of childbirth and exempt from putrefaction after death. Thus, both in theological and in popular level the cult of Mary “displayed an androcentric bias that [...] underlined the weakness, inferiority and subordination of real females.”<sup>11</sup> The emphasis on her uniqueness, in her ‘sinlessness’, and her insulation from human femaleness degrades real women, by implication. In fact, by believing in the absolute in-equality of Mary in terms of her womanhood it only reinforced the aspects that were devalued in the female condition, such as menstruation, pregnancy and childbirth. Mary's virginity underlines the pollution of intercourse; her exception from the burden of birth focuses exaggerated attention on them.

The explanation given by the Church which is supposed to solve all the theological problems for the faithful, actually emphasises the derisive ideological vision of woman and sexuality. They explain: Mary is God's mother, thus unique to him. So how could He – the Almighty God – not bestow her all the possible human privileges making her exempt from all sin? It is unthinkable for the most perfect son not to demonstrate in plenitude his infinite love for her. Only it means making her a desexualised woman, stressing definitely the sinful character of female sexuality.

Notwithstanding, the titles and her multiple roles under which Mary has been venerated throughout history she has provided woman with powerful models. Each Mary's title — the Queen of Heaven, the Mother of God, the Second Eve, the *Mater Dolorosa* — emphasises the various aspects involved in the feminine role – joys, sorrows and

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<sup>10</sup> Clement of Alexandria, DALY ibid.

<sup>11</sup> MCLAUGHLIN:246.

expectations –. Mary is the helpmate (of Redemption), the Mediator (between humankind and God), the Queen of the divine home – Heaven. Divine motherhood increased her commiseration and understanding of humankind's sorrows and pains. In the same way, women are their husbands' helpmates, the mediators between children/servants and all powerful father/head of the house, and although powerless a woman should reign absolute over home.

### *Other Models for Womanhood.*

Besides the symbolism surrounding Eve and Mary, the high value given to virginity in Catholicism was still central to the feminine imaginary in the 1950s, as it had been historically. The Church provided special models for girls — either saints who had died young, or the ones who left examples of the high value they awarded to virginity,<sup>12</sup> or to the love of God.

To the long list of earlier martyrs, such as Ines or Barbara, were added mystical nuns — Rose de Lima, Margarida Alacocque — who taught how one endures the most excruciating pains and lasting sacrifices in the name of love.

Two of those saints were very popular among young women at the 1950s in Brazil: Thérèse of Lisieux. and Maria Goretti. Thérèse of Lisieux was canonised in 1925 by Pope Pius XI. Its aim was to stress that people did not need to seek extraordinary religious experiences to be saints. Her understanding of sanctity – the Little Way as she called it – consisted in transforming all the events of daily life into opportunities for making 'sacrifices', as a way of reaching God<sup>13</sup> - which matched the philosophy of Guiding, and all the ideology behind the phrase: 'Behind a Great Man...' as will be discussed in the following chapter.

Thérèse of Lisieux came to be known as 'Little Thérèse'<sup>14</sup> and is also called 'The Little Flower of Jesus,' thus leaving an image of 'sugariness' and extreme sentimentality. In these terms she was a perfect symbol of Catholic womanhood. Thus, it is little wonder that she has been a cherished icon for Catholic girls since her canonisation. Her sentimentalism, her juvenile age, the appeal of a saint who used roses as a proof that she had listened and would attend your prayers – everything suited very much the imagination of adolescent girls.

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<sup>12</sup> Marina Warner points out that the association of holiness and physical virginity, the power of chastity over evil is "the strongest theme in the whole symphony of patristic writings, apocryphal tales and early ritual" and it was essential to the ideas of Christian asceticism, and its conception about woman and sexuality. As she pointed out "the cult of Mary is inextricably interwoven with Christian ideas about the dangers of the flesh and their special connections with women. WARNER, 1985:65-67.

<sup>13</sup> FURLONG, 1987:74.

<sup>14</sup> Contrasting to her homonym Tereza d'Avila, known as the Great.

On June 4, 1950 Pope Pius XII canonised Maria Goretti a saint. She had been murdered in 1902 at the age of eleven by a young man from the neighbourhood who tried to rape her. As she resisted, he stabbed her several times with a stiletto. Before dying she freely forgave him (a decisive step for his later religious conversion). Marina Warner comments that the stress on Maria Goretti's lengthy resistance follows the patterns of other stories of saint martyrs: whether in ancient times or in the twentieth century, the defence of virginity was worth all the savagery. The Pope's utterances in her beatification (April 27, 1947)<sup>15</sup> illuminates the ongoing process of reinforcement of this ideology.

*Italian girls especially, in the fair flower of their youth should raise their eyes to Heaven and gaze upon this shining example of maidenly virtue which rose from the midst of wickedness as a light shines in the darkness [...] God is wonderful in His saints [...] Now he has given to the young girls of our cruel and degraded world a model and protector, the little maid Maria who sanctified the opening of our century with her innocent blood.*<sup>16</sup>

Her canonisation brought up to date the Catholic doctrine about sexuality. Her story was narrated in the convents time and time again. Magazines remembered it again when Aida Curi was murdered. Maria Goretti started to be a common name for Catholic girls in Brazil from the 1950s.

## *The Brazilian Code of Honour*

The Roman Catholic Church boasts the universality of its doctrine, implicit in the name itself. Officially there is no negotiation with different historical or cultural needs and a deep reluctance to make changes in its norms and rules. However, religious doctrine operates at an ideal level. Although Church hierarchy intends to determine closed models for life – the same for all its followers, all over the world – people accommodate these models to their cultural patterns.

In Catholic doctrine pre-marital virginity is a rule for both, men and women. However, for a culture of Iberian tradition, which had 'machismo' as the masculine ethos, it sounds more like a heresy. Thus, for common sense, this is a rule only ascribed to women, to the point of regarding the sixth commandment as only directed to women, as opposed to the ninth, a masculine one.

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<sup>15</sup> Beatification is 'an act of the Pope declaring a deceased person to be in the enjoyment of heavenly bliss, and granting a form of worship to him/her. It is the first step towards canonisation. (The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary). However, not everyone who is granted such veneration is later canonised.

<sup>16</sup> My emphasis. Quoted by WARNER:71-72.

In fact 'machismo' has its necessary counterpoint in the social control of female sexuality. This control meant 'chastity' for part of the feminine population and prostitution for the other; put in religious terms, a population of Marys opposed to Magdalens or Eves. In the Brazilian 1950s, a dichotomy between '*garotas de família*' (family girls) or '*garotas direitas*' (nice or honest girls,) and '*garotas faladas*' (literally the ones whom everybody speaks about or 'slags'). It is a society with double moral standards, that clearly defines gender spaces: "a woman's place was in the home, and a girl turned loose causes talk." The popular expression '*garde suas cabras que meus bodes estão soltos*' (take hold of your she-goats for my billy-goats are loose) reveals the popular conception about sexual control.

Left by herself, woman will certainly sin since her natural immoderate sexuality is Eve's heritage, so she must be carefully watched over to keep her virginity. On the contrary, man is supposed to seduce every and any woman he meets. The meaning of the expression is obvious: Don't complain about my son's sexual behaviour. It is his role 'to try' and your duty to educate your daughter to say 'no'. Double moral standards. Not only a contrasting one for boys and girls in the same family; but also expected moral standards for one's own girl, quite different from those desired for their neighbours' ones.

The expression '*garotas de família*' makes clear that feminine virginity, more than a religious precept, was a social rule; and rather than a mere individual achievement it was a familiar concern, under social imposition. To watch over woman's proper behaviour was a duty of the males of the family, and home environment should lead a girl 'naturally' to keep her virginity through an imposed 'free and spontaneous' will:

*He allowed Bibiana to go to dances only two or three times a year, and then only in his company; during the whole time he would sit in a corner without taking his eyes off her. Because he was afraid people might start talking about his daughter, for, 'the mouth of the public is bigger than mouth of the night, and a lot meaner.'<sup>17</sup>*

These characters lived in the eighteenth century, and in the 1950s, a girl going out only three times a year was a bygone standard. However, such description matches that of the middle-class parents in the 1950s.<sup>18</sup>

In their analysis of the Mediterranean system of honour, some authors assumed that woman does not have honour, only shame. The same thing cannot be said about Brazil. A clear association between honour and virginity, is revealed by the expression 'a girl had been dishonoured,' (*desonrada*) referring to sexual intercourse out of wedlock. Such dishonour called for reparation – usually a quick and shameful marriage, which would

<sup>17</sup> This quotation is from Érico Veríssimo's novel *Time and Wind* first published in 1951, which tells the story of Rio Grande do Sul, through the saga of a family.

<sup>18</sup> As Pitt-Rivers argued for Andalusia, in Brazil the honour of the family, "delegates the virtue expressed in sexual purity to the females and the duty of defending female virtue to the males." PITT-RIVERS, 1965.

control a sexuality regarded thereafter as having no constraints, since– “She had nothing more to lose.” An old fashioned synonym of 'dishonoured' was '*perdida*' ('lost girl'). In a common metaphor, virginity was regarded as kind of 'social brake' that would prevent woman from sinning, bringing disruption and shame on her family and herself. A 'dishonoured woman' was considered shameless (*sem vergonha*), she had lost her shame (*perder a vergonha*) or she had not shame on her face (*vergonha na cara*). In this case, only bad can be expected from her moral behaviour.

However, both - man and woman - must attempt to behave within the boundaries of what is considered proper for their sex, it is because both have the same “fear of exposing oneself to comment and criticism.” That is why in the Brazilian context the key word in this system of honour was 'reputation' rather than honour or shame. 'Reputation' represented the social evaluation of the individual/family made by the group. Implicit in a good reputation is the fact that a person is honourable and shameful. Thus it is a more general and “theoretically less ambiguous concept than honour.”<sup>19</sup>

Honour and reputation are not words of daily concern. It seems that they are taken for granted, in the sense that people suppose that the normal way of life is to be honourable and have a good reputation. Therefore, reputation in the positive sense is seldom mentioned; when it is said that one knows the reputation of somebody, it is often assumed that it is a bad one. Honour is not an issue that people would speak about daily, either. The issue would arise only when regarded as threatened. But shame is a virtue of everyday concern, or a word in daily vocabulary. As Pitt-Rivers mentioned there is

*one further usage of the word verguenza which is common to both sexes and this is in the sense of 'to put to shame', literally to give shame, or speaking about oneself, to feel shame, literally, 'to be given it'.*

In the sense quoted above, *vergonha* is commonly used for children, meaning punishment. And even then, unless the adult is one of their parents, if one says that '*vou te ensinar a ter vergonha na cara*' (literally, to teach how to have shame on your face) or *dar vergonha* (give shame), it is also regarded as deep humiliation.<sup>20</sup>

*Respeito* (respect) is another key word seldom mentioned. A man showed that he respected the girl if he cared for her reputation. And that meant avoiding anything that could 'tarnish' it. A metaphor for it was the petal of the white rose, that is a stained once touched. The idea that a woman's reputation was something very delicate was as present as in the

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<sup>19</sup> HERSZEFELD, *ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Even then I would not dare to affirm that is shame rather than honour, or reputation that is the predominant concern in Brazil, as WIKAN, 1984 ventures. I would agree with her, that it is not self-evident that honour is always the binary opposition of shame. However, only in the context of daily life situations would it be possible to confirm if it is true for all groups.



thirteenth century. In the 1950s as then, the woman's reputation was regarded as “fragile as any glass, for once it is broken it may never be mended to its former wholeness any more than glass can.”<sup>21</sup> And people's talk would certainly put it at risk.

The epithet '*garota falada*' can only be understood in the context of reputation. This expression is linked to two other very common expressions with the same meaning: '*cair na boca do povo*' (to be in everyone's mouth) and '*andar de boca em boca*' (literally, *to go from one mouth to the other*, to be spread about). They are used when a bad action, fact or attitude becomes public. To be a *garota falada* meant 'public stigma', and usually these girls were also referred to as 'one of those', as if their name had become a taboo. They were unmentionable women – a paradoxical situation when one becomes, at the same time, 'unmentionable' and '*falada*', that is 'overmentioned.'<sup>22</sup> Rachel Jardim, in her book about the 1940s in Brazil, describes both situations:

*It was a fantastic story: Uncle Nono had a woman in Guar. One of those whose name no one pronounces. The affair had lasted. The woman had a child, one of those that no one speaks about [...]*

Not to mention, or not speak about someone is a way to make such women invisible, that is a way of making believe that they do not exist. It can be seen as a defence mechanism of the group, a way to eliminate those who do not conform: the marginal, those who break the rules. Rachel Jardim continues her account with a comment on another of her uncles:

*[Uncle Carlos] was married to a girl from Guar, a friend of Aunt Inaia, who we called Dudu. Her father was a deputy in So Paulo. Her upbringing was considered 'very independent', and she scandalised the town. She was one of those considered 'faladssimas', in Minas.*

Later, the author explains:

*One day, Aunt Madalena called me to say that Laura and I, were going to become 'faladssimas'. I asked why. She didn't know. We were a bit uncommon. We weren't 'the marriageable type'. It made the people suspicious: if we didn't want to marry, what else would we be willing to do?<sup>23</sup>*

The fear of becoming '*falada*' was responsible for an environment where woman were supposed to live unnoticed and unseen, they feared one “formidable institution,

<sup>21</sup> In an English rule for the anchoress written in the thirteenth century, the author compares virginity to a “precious liquid” carried in a “delicate vessel, balm in a brittle glass.” This vessel is “as fragile as any glass, for once it is broken it may never be mended to its former wholeness any more than glass can. But it breaks even more easily than does brittle glass, for glass only breaks if something strikes it, whereas this vessel can lose its wholeness through an unclean desire.” [...] *this precious balsam in a fragile glass is virginity and cleanness* [...] As Clarissa Atkinson remarks, these two ways of looking at virginity were present throughout medieval Christianity, or we could say, throughout the whole history of the Catholic religion. ATKINSON, 1983:137.

<sup>22</sup> Renee Hirschon has pointed out the same for Greece. HIRSCHON, 1978

<sup>23</sup> *Faladssima* is the superlative form of *falada*. JARDIM, 1979: 37, 64 respectively.

'people's talk. It was important not to give others the opportunity or reason to speak about their behaviour, as one popular proverb runs: "Those who are not seen, cannot be remembered" (*Quem não é visto, não é lembrado*). Unni Wikan pointed out about the people she studied in Cairo:

*In everything they do, people are forced to consider 'what will people say', and by this they do not mean 'How will people evaluate and judge', but 'how might they condemn and distort?'*<sup>24</sup>

Therefore a great value was attached to appearances. To wear the proper dress, to have the proper friends, nothing that could call too much attention from others: too much make-up, bright colours, loud laughing. This behaviour could bring the label of 'being easy' (*fácil*). The proverb was also unequivocal: 'Tell me what company you keep, and I will tell you who you are.' (*Dize me com quem andas e dir-te-ei quem és*); being honest (*'ser direita'*) was less important than to look honest (*parecer direita*). The Brazilian journalist Fernando Gabeira, writing about the 1950s exemplifies the situation:

*In the school, the struggle started because of her hair. It was fair – the colour of honey. The nuns decided that it attracted too much attention. Thus, they demanded that she dye her hair black, to look like the others.*

Their fear was that a *garota de família* could be confused with an easy girl, such as this one described in a romance whose story took place in the 1940s, (the scene is the first meeting of Juju with Gina, her boy-friend's mother):

*Gina sat in front of her and could see up to her thighs [...] Juju had taken off her hat. She had peroxide curly hair and didn't simply put lipstick on but had drawn a dark red mouth. She laughed unpleasantly and loudly at anything. [...] Gina observed her very short dress. Everything in Juju was tasteless, exaggerate, extravagant. She had on two rings with huge fake gemstone, gold earrings, necklace, a brooch with a lot of charms, several bracelets in both arms tinkling at every gesture. She gesticulated briskly, and an irritating sound was heard all the time.*

The inadequacy of the attire or its exaggeration is the sign of being easy. It can either be something out of date (a hair style that was fashionable years ago), out of place (high heels to school); or excessive (tight trousers and tops too low or overdone make-up). This seems to reinforce the model of the perfect lady, as the one who knows how to keep her serenity; who wears the right dress for the right place; prefers the 'classical style', that is plain and undated, rather than fashionable.<sup>25</sup>

A girl's reputation was a sort of capital regarding her future marriage – an idea that was critically commented upon by priests and religious manuals, as a sort of family

<sup>24</sup> WIKAN, *ibid.* To this situation clearly applies the Brazilian fear of 'being from mouth to mouth' or to be spread about.

<sup>25</sup> For an analysis of the manipulation of the so-called 'classical style' by middle-class woman in a Brazilian small town, see OLIVEIRA SILVA, 1985..

hypocrisy. To them virginity was a religious virtue, and only in these terms should be considered. They despised those who – by their attitudes – seemed to consider it as kind of good which could be bargained towards a 'rich or proper marriage.' This underlines the possibility of manipulating the norms for the sake of the fulfilment of personal projects. For instance: a) the seduction of the girl could be a strategy to force the marriage when it was opposed by the parents; b) a girl could induce her seduction, to compel her *namorado* to marry her if it was a long lasting *namoro*; c) the parents could leave the couple to themselves, relax their vigilance, or 'ease the things' hoping that the seduction of their daughter would lead her to a rich or proper marriage. These were anomalous occurrences, that the group could regard either with tolerance or consider despicable (as this third example), according to the circumstances.

Feminine virginity was the fundamental pre-requisite for marriage. A kind of price, or security premium she must have, lest she face the risk of becoming a spinster: a person without a place or a life of her own; condemned to stay forever under her parent's authority. Therefore a 'dishonoured' girl was condemned to spinsterhood, and thus to unhappiness, since no other man would want a 'second-hand wife'.<sup>26</sup>

To perform a 'faux pas' (*mau passo*) meant to become the family's 'black sheep' forever – someone to be hidden from others. A quick marriage was regarded as an imperative, chiefly if the girl became pregnant. Legal action could even be taken by the family of girls younger than 21, to compel the man to marry her. It was popularly called 'marriage in the police station' (*'casamento na polícia*), and could really occur in extreme cases.

However, there was widely believed that no happiness could result from such marriage: no man would respect or trust a wife who had not made herself respected. Worst of all, she would forever be in a disadvantage point for in quarrels he could always bring it up. For the wife it would be a life of enduring shame; a straightforward woman (or girl) had to know how to make herself respected (*dar-se ao respeito*). Nevertheless, there was not the slightest doubt that even an unhappy marriage, to endure a life time, was preferable to dishonour. Besides, there was a feeling that the woman acted in such a way as to deserve it (*fez por merecer*) as if unhappiness were the punishment for those who broke the rules.

The Brazilian code of honour as described above concerns women's sexuality. It does not mean that men's honour is entirely dependent on women's sexual behaviour, although an honourable man is the one whose family is entirely honourable. But it is not

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<sup>26</sup> Cowie and Lees comments about a similar situation in the London 1980: "woman [...] as a sexual object is a commodity that becomes worthless with consumption and yet who as a sexual being, once sexually experienced becomes promiscuous."

enough, he must also be honourable in business and money affairs: he must be a man who keeps his word (*um homem de palavra*), who honours his word (*honrar a sua palavra*), or his commitments (*seus compromissos*).<sup>27</sup> The hypothesis of this thesis is that the *word* (word of honour) epitomises men's honour in the same way, that 'virginity' or 'sexual purity', (or even, 'the feminine genitals') do for women. In literature the dramatic situation that epitomises men's honour is the 'gambling debt', the honour of the gambler who struggles to pay the debt in spite of everything.

A man's word goes beyond law, what is legal matters less than the social expectation of what honourable is: thus a straightforward man would marry a woman over 21 years to keep his word and commitment, even if the law considered her fully responsible for her acts. Moreover, it was regarded as a proof of respect for family as an institution (epitomised in the woman's family), otherwise he would be known for that time on as *'aproveitador'* (one who took advantages of). Widely endorsed comments were "First, he 'take advantage of her' (*aproveitou-se dela*) now he simply can't get rid of her (*se livrar dela*). However, social representations of men's and women's faults against honour seem to have different evaluations – the first are more easily repaired than the second.<sup>28</sup> This is encapsulated in the popular woman's complaint: "*em homem nada pega.*" (in man's [honour] nothing is attached).<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> The novel *Time and the Wind* provides a good example : *Licurgo absorbed the articles of the code of honour of these people – a code that had never be written down, but that took on body, became visible in thousands of examples and cases that were repeated from mouth to mouth. According to that code a man, to be a real man , needed a beard and shame on his face. To have shame on his face was to have a clean face which no man had ever struck. 'If a man slaps you, kill the lowborn dog immediately'. To have shame on the face meant also never to break a promise given, cost what it might. It was related that in the Province great transactions were made on credit in which, instead of signing a document the debtor gave the creditor a hair of his beard, which for those men of honour was worth as much as any document signed and sealed before a notary.* VERISSIMO, 1969.

<sup>28</sup> A good example is represented by two romantic novels with parallel plots: *'Lucíola'* and *'Senhora'*. Both novels were written by José de Alencar in 1862 and 1875, respectively. He is still a very popular author and his books are widely read in high schools as part of the Brazilian literature syllabus. In this case, the adjective Romantic is taken in the specific sense of ' the distinctive qualities or the spirit of the romantic school [of the nineteenth century] in art, literature and music' (The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary).

<sup>29</sup> The verb *pegar* has a double meaning here: on the one hand it means to attach , to label; in the other to catch. Thus, contrary to man in *woman everything attaches/catches* - her honour is always at risk, because she can be labelled *falada* (getting a bad reputation) moreover she can 'catch' pregnancy.

## *The Process of Courtship*

The common form of courtship in the 1950s was the traditional '*namoro*' which culminates in the '*noivado*' (engagement) and ends in the wedding day.<sup>30</sup> There are several stages in this process, which could be seen as a movement from the street towards the girl's house, or from the public to the private realm, represented by the girl's family. It also meant going from secrecy to visibility, which implied tacit family agreement to the daughter's commitment.

## *The Ritual and Etiquette of Namoro*

For the teenage girl, *namoro*, more than the mere process of courtship, was the time of learning the skills to be the perfect wife. Underpinning this process, was the idea that it was a woman's duty to please her man, regulating her conduct by the preferences or the exigencies of her partner. Restrictions in woman's manners and will were enveloped in the idea of romantic love where jealousy plays a part. Therefore, far from being negatively regarded, conformity to these restrictions was positively considered as the proper attitude of a woman in love.

In other words, traditional *namoro* provided the learning of submission. *Namoro* could be thought of in Foucault's<sup>31</sup> terms as a set of dispositions for disciplining woman's body and will. What made it possible was the socially shared assumption that in '*namoro*' there are "some rights or at least an expectation of rights and duties between the couple " which means "a project of hierarchy of positions which anticipates the most likely future role of husband and wife." Thales de Azevedo assumes the right of the man :

*to repress the coquetries, the ostentation, the fashion that could call attention to her; [...] A 'betrothed' girl must be modest in her manners and*

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<sup>30</sup> This process has been extensively studied by the Brazilian sociologist, Thales de Azevedo ( AZEVEDO, 1976; 1980; 1986). He states that there are many differences in this process in comparison with that of other cultures, chiefly dating in America. Dating, the American way of courtship is an event of the 20th century. As it is characterised by the couple 'going out' instead of the previous 'calling on' the girl's house, the rise of the date is linked to the popularisation of the automobile in the 1920s. However Peter Ling argues that it is more likely to be linked to changes in social relationships earlier in the 1910s. LING, 1989:19-20. On the contrary, in Brazilian 1950s, the car was a space strictly forbidden for girls with their '*namorados*' until their engagement, in the more traditional areas in Brazil. Besides the books of this author, novels of the period are also source of data of a process whose etiquette is otherwise considered common-sense.

<sup>31</sup> See FOUCAULT, 1977.

*moderate in the use of fashion since she should have no more interest in seducing another man.*<sup>32</sup>

Impositions made by the '*namorado*' regarded details such as forbidding lipstick or nail-varnish considered too garish, extravagant dresses<sup>33</sup> or hair. The general idea was to put these young women totally apart from other men, either making them less enticing to them or banning all kind of friendly acquaintanceship with even close male relatives. In the extreme, woman could even be forced to refrain from pronouncing their names.<sup>34</sup> Woman had to preserve decorum by looking straight ahead, without 'sweeping the street with the eyes'.<sup>35</sup> *Namorado's* zealous demands could reach such an extreme that their girl-friends could only go out chaperoned by their mother<sup>36</sup> or his close relatives, and be restricted to answering the door or phone calls.

The importance of those almost autocratic demands for this analysis lies in the fact that they are not a mere personal caprice or idiosyncrasy. This explains why, although the majority of *namorados* did not go so far in their demands, these cases of extreme jealousy which often happened, could be regarded with social tolerance. No one expected that a girl 'going steady' could have the same behaviour, wear the same dresses, coiffure, make-up as she had before. The result of such a disciplining of the women's social body was widely decoded as sign of 'having a steady boy-friend'. This symbolic violence was also decoded as 'signs of love' and in it, this symbolic violence finds its justification.<sup>37</sup>

These so-called 'signs of love' encompassed the girls in the universe of the ones who were not alone, who had a *namorado*, who were not destined to spinsterhood, or else those who would not remain at the margins of society, but would accomplish the woman's right destiny. Symbolically, this code of love' is analogous to tribal marks which include some in the group whilst excluding others. In a society where marriage was the apogee of

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<sup>32</sup> Azevedo, 1986:58-59.

<sup>33</sup> At the end of the 1950s, the fashion of the day were dresses called 'tube, sacks, balloons or trapezes, each one regarded as more extravagant than the previous. So the girls were simply asked to be out-of-dated to please their '*namorados*.'

<sup>34</sup> Issues about other men should not be of any interest for a woman who already had hers, was man's reasoning to justify the extremist demand.

<sup>35</sup> Literal translation of '*varrendo a rua com os olhos*.'

<sup>36</sup> Compare this information with the mystical accounts of the Italian nun Veronica Giuliani "Thus my Lord and God espoused me and gave me in charge to his most holy mother for ever and ever, and made my Guardian Angel watch over me, for He was jealous of my honour."<sup>36</sup> It shows her total submissiveness to her mystical spouse, which also means to attribute to a man – even if he is the Christ – every power over her body. This utterance has a striking correspondence with the accounts of Brazilian *namorados* in the 1950s. ARMSTRONG, 1986:154.

<sup>37</sup> Peruvian saint Rosa de Lima reported that one day when she was walking in the garden, she noticed that all the flowers had been picked. Then she heard Jesus explaining: "Rose, my Rose. Thou art a flower. Give me all thy love, for know that was I that gather these flowers, for I have no rival, no not any creature even if it be a flower shall share with me all thy heart." M. Summers, *The Physical Phenomena of Mysticism* (:106-107). Quoted in ARMSTRONG, 1986:185.

woman's life, submission to these strict demands was easily achieved, since it meant for the woman that she was loved and cared for by a jealous and devoted master.

This idea of educating and disciplining young women's will was more evident in some men's preference for having as '*namorada*' quite young girls. Generally those '*namoro*' started in her early teens and lasted through to his graduation, and employment. The widely accepted justification was the man's patriarchal wish of 'rearing' the girl in his particular way. The verb used for this process of 'shaping' a person was not chosen at random: until the 1960s, like children and the insane, married women were considered under the legal 'age' – they had no right to sign contracts, sell properties, keep a job without the husband's formal permission. Thus, those younger '*namoradas*' were confined into 'childhood' for their entire life.

For these young women, it meant a whole adolescence spent like a nun – no fashion, no make-up, enclosed at home embroidering her 'trousseau'. She should be the modern 'patriarch's virgin future wife, the future mother of his children whom he treated with foremost respect, regarding her moral reputation.

For his pleasure the man had 'the others'. His attitude would anticipate his future sexual behaviour, There was a consensus among counsellors that the greater womaniser he was, the more modesty from his *namorada* he demanded. It was explained that he certainly feared that other men could do to his '*namorada*' what he did to other women. Thales de Azevedo pointed out that research has shown:

*[T]he noticeable contradiction between the rules of modesty and chastity imposed by the traditional fathers and 'noivos' on their daughters, wives and 'noivas,' and their 'licentious behaviour' towards, not only prostitutes, but even 'family' women, and girls, unless they belong to their own family.<sup>38</sup>*

A girl who had a *namorado* was under a man's protection, which would keep her aside from any gossip about her behaviour.<sup>39</sup> That is why '*terminar o namoro*' (to end a steady relationship) was a kind of 'liminal' stage, when the girl's reputation could be at risk : there was fear about gossip spread by the ex-boy-friend, but the greater danger was the process in itself. Thales de Azevedo observes:

*According to the code that demands fortitude and determination in defence of her honour, the dignity of a woman requires that hers must be the initiative of breaking up a commitment. Otherwise she would be dismissed and humiliated among her peers. It is up to her to elude a reconciliation without evidences of regret. She must give back all his gifts, and demand that he return her photographs, letters and all the signs of previous*

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<sup>38</sup> AZEVEDO, 1986:68.

<sup>39</sup> Consensually it was his *namorado's* own business. Naturally it did not include infidelity: likewise husbands, *namorados* could be 'horned' (only it was a lesser stigma than in marriage.)

*engagement. This kind of conduct was more mandatory the more public the commitment had been.*<sup>40</sup>

This shows that the rupture of a *noivado* and even *namoro firme* was not so easily accomplished. At the discourse level, the whole process of courtship was a transitory commitment that could be easily broken, and *namorados* should be easily substituted until a perfect match had been found. Actually the reality was different. There were many forms of social pressures against it, although a popular phrase says “the commitment to marriage can be broken at the church door” (or at the altar). However, having had many *namorados* granted her with the label of *namoradeira*, a step towards being considered *falada*. Hence the great praise for the women who married the first *namorado*:

*A motive to be proud of and also a proof of dignity for a woman is to be married with her first and only namorado. It means that she had never shared her affection with another man. It can be considered a moral attribute of virginity, of perfect chastity and an important element of monogamy. Novels both from the XIX century and the present very often had praised this kind of exclusiveness. The repetition of successive namoros betrayed a kind of negative characteristic of a woman's personality which our culture rejects, labelling her capricious and inconstant.*

### *House and Street in Courtship Etiquette.*

The description of the Brazilian *namoro*, as it was in the 1950s stresses the dichotomy always present between house and street, identified with the public and the private domain, and the separation of gender roles.<sup>41</sup>

Home is the private sphere, the family's universe, and more than anything else it is a feminine domain. Women might be isolated there to have their reputation and honour preserved or defended, which also meant avoiding any manifestation of sexuality.

Paradoxically, the *namoro*, should not be developed in the safety of home, but in the free dominion of the streets, until it reached the point of an almost formal commitment. (Although it did not mean any space, only legitimates ones). The *flirt* started in the most public sphere of the small towns – the main street or square. Then it expanded to other spaces such as the school and the church – finally to the front gate and from it to the front porch of her house. To both spaces Sue Bridwell Beckham's remark applies that “occupants

<sup>40</sup> AZEVEDO, 1986: 74. His quotation looks so much with those from religious manuals. Sometimes is hard to evaluate how far he endorsed the situations he described.

<sup>41</sup> This dichotomy has been extensively analysed by Roberto DaMatta in books and articles. He explains: “*It is obvious that the opposition street / house separates two mutually exclusive domains. Yet the opposition operates in a complex way, since it may be expressed both in the form of a static binary dichotomy and in terms of gradations (i.e., in a continuum) The spatial division of the Brazilian home itself suggests the possibility of gradation, of compromise and mediation.* DAMATTA, 1991: 65 (translation of DAMATTA, 1978). See also DAMATTA, 1985.



of a porch are betwixt and between because they are neither fully sheltered from the elements nor fully exposed to them – neither fully a part of the workings of the public sphere nor fully excluded from them.<sup>42</sup> The next step was marked by a new movement from the front porch to the living room. To be received in a girl's home which meant a tacit family agreement to the daughter's commitment, and for the suitor, a final step towards engagement and marriage.<sup>43</sup>

This apparent paradox represented by this movement from street to house can only be understood if regarded as part of a cultural context that has family as its focal point, and where this dichotomy (between street and house) is invested with many symbolic meanings.<sup>44</sup>

As Roberto DaMatta explains, house and street can be seen in terms of gradations, in a continuum where not only some parts of the house are more public, as an analogy can be drawn between some parts of the house and some areas of the public domain:

*The porch or veranda is an ambiguous space between the house and the street generally located facing the street. The parlour or drawing room is also an intermediate space, although within the house, since it is a place where the visitors are received. Another ambiguous component of the house, situated between the inside and outside world, is made up of the windows, from which one can 'see' the street and its constant display of movement. As we learn from Thales de Azevedo<sup>45</sup> it was from the windows that the young ladies of a house could make visual contact with their boy friends<sup>46</sup>*

On the other hand, according to this author, there is a correspondence between the layout of Brazilian cities and the layout of the home with its well marked internal divisions.<sup>47</sup> As the author says, the Church and the Town Hall were located in the main square and (the author forgets to add) the main places for leisure, is analogous to the house's drawing room. And it is there, in the 'drawing room' of the town that the process of courtship usually started.

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<sup>42</sup> BECKHAM, 1988: 72. Although this author is analysing the role of the front porch in American houses up to the 1920, the same comments apply to Brazil as Roberto DaMatta's analysis and Maria Luiza Heilborn's research among adolescents in a suburb of Rio had proved. HEILBORN, 1984.

<sup>43</sup> It was known as '*namorar em casa*' (to be courted at home), a synonymous to *namorar firme* (to go steady), an intermediate stage between *namoro* and *noivado*.

<sup>44</sup> See DAMATTA, 1987, also DAMATTA, 1979 and DAMATTA, 1985.

<sup>45</sup> Roberto DaMatta quotes AZEVEDO, 1975.

<sup>46</sup> DAMATTA, 1985:65.

<sup>47</sup> In fact it can be said that at the level of the city, the street is also a category open to subdivisions: 'my street' or 'our street' in opposition to 'the street' as a general, disembodied category. In addition, the street is the place where I have my house, whereas the *praça* (the square) constitutes an area of formal and impersonal encounters, a kind of urban drawing room. Thus the squares of Latin America are always dotted with geometric, well tended gardens[...] The square represents the aesthetic aspects of the city[...] There we find the gardens and the edifices that are most basic to the social life of community: the church (the religious power)[...] the town hall (representing political power)

Narrow streets, mews, and tight corners were prohibited places to meet *namorados*. These were considered the domestic servant's places. Here an analogy can be made with the servants' rooms in the houses, which were represented as ambiguous spaces for relating. "the world of the house with the street, work, poverty and marginality."<sup>48</sup> Thus, advice about proper behaviour of *namorados* in the street had a clear connotation of social class differences.<sup>49</sup> Soares D'Azevedo places a visible distance between the behaviour of a 'well-bred couple' and the others:

*Strolling around the streets, squares and gardens, hand in hand, squeezing and rubbing each other, is more appropriate for people of low classes, of bad origin. It is not a proper behaviour for a well-educated couple who have a higher and serious conception of what love is.*<sup>50</sup>

House and Street are not only regarded in terms of a continuum as we saw, they may also be expressed in terms of a static binary dichotomy: "The street basically points to the world with its unpredictable events, accidents, and passions; the house refers to a controlled universe where everything is in its proper place."<sup>51</sup> But the basic opposition between the two domains is the control that is possible to wield over one, and the impossibility of doing so over the other. These two ways of regarding street and house – as a continuum and as a static dichotomy – can explain the etiquette of courtship in the Brazilian 1950s.

Although both domains must be governed by a hierarchy based on *respeito* and *consideração* (respect and consideration), the ways of expressing them are very different in the street and the home. This dichotomy is also a metaphor of the distinction between gender roles, and regards the public sphere as a masculine domain and the private one, as the feminine domain. Gilberto Freyre analyses the traditional Brazilian custom of maintaining woman segregated at home and secluded from stranger's eyes as an Arab heritage.<sup>52</sup> Therefore, to be received in one's home had always been regarded as a great proof of esteem and the skill in separating these two domains – house and street – the greatest proof of respect a husband could give to his wife.

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<sup>48</sup> DAMATTA, *ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> A report of the magazine *Manchete* about places where *namorados* could be found in Rio: beaches, streets, squares was illustrated with photographs of coloured couples whose appearance identify them as members of lower classes possibly domestic servants with soldiers.

<sup>50</sup> My emphasis. D'AZEVEDO, 1948: 124.

<sup>51</sup> This fact is well exemplified (and mocked) by Jorge Amado, 1986. Teodoro Madureira, D. Flor's boring second husband had as his golden rule: *A proper place for everything. Everything in its proper place.*

<sup>52</sup> FREYRE, 1975. For this reason, traditionally the space considered as the most intimate for guests is the kitchen. To call for a coffee in the kitchen is an invitation to closer acquaintanceship. An old expression still used in rural areas is - I am from the kitchen of the family x, which has the same meaning. Seclusion of woman is the plot of *Inocência*, a novel from the romantic author Visconde Taunay (1843-1899) still very much favoured by adolescent girls in the 1950s.

In earlier research (conducted in the early 1980s) I collected several examples of this. For instance, one wife (in her sixties) related that her husband had been an inveterate philanderer : “However he had always respected me. He separated very well his life outside, and his life at home. He never ever allowed the slightest sign of it, or gossip reached us or tainted our lives at home.” And although knowing about his love affairs, her attitude was to make believe that she was unaware. It was her point of honour. Otherwise, as she said, “it would mean to putting myself, his legal wife, on the same level as the others.” Another woman (also in her sixties) praised the husband for keeping his friends – whom he met at bars to drink and chat – apart from home : “those were his colleagues for the streets [literally out-of-home-front-door] I never allowed him to bring them to my home, and he wouldn't dare to do this to me. It would be a sign of profound lack of respect for his family.”

In both cases – in spite of adultery and nights systematically spent at bars – they praised their husbands as “men who respected and deeply loved their family and who were profoundly devoted to home.” Home and street were regarded as intrinsically separate domains. Things that happened in one could never affect the other. This idea explains the great value attached to the '*namoro em casa*', as a sign of commitment. From the etiquette of *namoro* resulted the apprenticeship to the patterns of behaviour that the woman should have after marriage: whilst her social group expected that *namoro* for the girls meant the learning of submission, by contrast, for the man, the bachelor years should be a time to take maximum advantage of all the pleasures available – a kind of prophylactic measure, as if an overdose of pleasure could prevent him going on doing the same after marriage. As the future head of the family, a man should have knowledge of the world, mastery of sexual affairs, economic predominance and the last word about everything. In other words the *namoro* was the time to set up rules and norms regarding the separation of gender roles, the segregation of spaces and sexual double standards.

Finally underlying the whole process of courtship was the ideology of romantic love, and love marriage as the only possible alternative to achieve perennial happiness.<sup>53</sup> It was the endless script of romances, novels, and films, as will be analysed in the following chapters. On the other hand, marriage as the fulfilment of one's vocation, a way to accomplish the designs of God, was the counterpoint to the discourse of the religious manuals in the 1950s.

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<sup>53</sup> This theme had been analysed by SARSBY, 1983. See GOODE, 1959 for the comparison between attitudes to love in different societies. For the origin of romantic love see CASTRO & ARAUJO, 1977.

## *Conclusion*

This chapter aimed to show the cultural context of the Brazilian middle classes in relation to domesticity and sexuality: that is the so called complex of honour and shame encompassed by Catholic doctrine, which is here exemplified by the conventions of the process of courtship in the 1950s.

However, it is important to stress that the broader ideologies which Brazil shares with other cultures are lived in the cultural environment of what DaMatta calls the Brazilian dilemma, epitomised by the ritual of *jeitinho*.<sup>54</sup> It is the tacit agreement to *jeitinho* which also underlies the manipulation of the loss of virginity to force a convenient marriage as described.

This cultural environment is synthesised in a letter about lesbianism in Brazil to the Feminist Review:

*I have the impression that in order to come to an understanding, one would have to put aside all attempts at rationalisation. Not because we are a chaotic society, but because we are not ruled by the moral codes we learned so dutifully in school and church. There are the rules and the denial of the rules. The average Brazilian survives dealing with denial, not with the rules. In a country where nothing seems to be possible, we have to deal with the impossible and make the best of it.*<sup>55</sup> Thus, things are never

absolute, or what they are supposed to be. That is why one cannot think about honour and shame, or any other value as being a binary opposition, or as if they were indisputable values.

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<sup>54</sup> This Brazilian particularity is well exemplified by Nacib's solution for feminine adultery in the novel *Gabriela, Clove and Cinnamon*, see the last chapter of this thesis.

<sup>55</sup> *Feminist Review* 1990, p 12.

## Chapter 3

# *Religious Practice and Catholic Womanhood.*

## *Introduction*

The objective of this chapter is to show how Catholic ideology about woman and sexuality, was lived in contemporary terms in the Brazilian 1950s. Such adaptation took practice at the convents with the help of religious didactic literature and was reinforced by the romantic novels which the girls read in their spare time. Their aim was to construct the Catholic ideal of womanhood, to fulfil the expectations of the middle classes. The axiom that middle-class families sought upward mobility to be achieved through their children; through higher education and hypergamic alliances was taken for granted. The joint efforts of the couple towards this goal meant the appropriation /administration of economic capital by the husband and of social/cultural capital by the wife. Such skills were an important aspect of the girl's education at higher ranking convents.

The Church also provided religious movements for women, and infused with its doctrine formal or informal educational organisations of civil society.

The educational action of the Church in Brazil was part of its strategy for regaining the power and the influence it had lost in the Proclamation of the Republic (1889) with the consequent separation between Church and the State. A good Catholic education should create a political elite able to act in favour of the Church's interests. The education of woman to become the mothers of these leaders follows the same reasoning.

The Church therefore not only aimed to construct female roles but did it in a class specific manner: a ladylike socialisation performed in the convents, an intellectual finishing refinement acquired in the Catholic Universities which did not exclude — rather deeply informed — a more intense social and religious commitment carried on religious and laic movements. It is important to stress the ambiguity of such educational politics, since they mixed traditional values with more modern viewpoints constructing a feminine subjectivity which could either reproduce the more traditional pattern of femininity or introduce more modern forms of behaviour.

## *The Social Construction of Chastity*

The most important step in a Catholic child's religious and social life was/is the First Communion, generally taken at seven or eight years of age. Religious instruction for the ritual consisted in learning by heart, rather than understanding the whole book '*Segundo Catecismo da Doutrina Cristã*' (The Second Catechism of Christian Doctrine'),<sup>1</sup> to the point that synonyms were regarded as gross mistakes.

Special emphasis was given to the Sixth Commandment, considered to be the 'Commandment for women,'<sup>2</sup> since it was related to purity. For a seven year-old girl it concerned her manners – the way she sat, dressed and behaved; not wearing low cut, or sleeveless dresses, short skirts, and later, trousers, and make-up, this was how purity was translated in her terms. As the nuns used to say: "Our Lady blushes every time you cross your legs"<sup>3</sup> and all the saints in Heaven would put their hands over the ears, if a girl uttered awful words. So an eight-year old girl could easily say in her confession – "I've sinned against chastity a lot of times," without knowing exactly what she was talking about. However, as soon as she became older she would probably suspect that the whole truth had not been told.

The ideology of purity had as its key point the principle that the "body is the temple of the Holy Spirit" – the house of God. It is sacred and must not be defiled. The idea of sacredness was taken to the limit in this quotation from a religious manual of sex education:

*Mother has the obligation to teach the child to be respectful to the human body, to uphold it as a temple. Therefore, if there's not a need, one must not put one's hand in the sacred organs for life transmission, or in the tabernacle of nativity.<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> This catechism was banned following the changes imposed by the Concilium in the 1960s. It was substituted by other books that posed the doctrine in infantile terms. Now the emphasis is on understanding rather than repeating it by heart, as a kind of mantra. The Second Catechism and all that it represented became old-fashioned and part of the pre-Concilium practices which the Church definitely abandoned. Perhaps this can explain why I could not find a single copy of it during my research, even in Church libraries.

<sup>2</sup> By contrast to the ninth, considered to be the man's - a representation strongly related to the culture of machismo. This representation is the translation in religious terms of the phrase - take care of your she-goats, because my goats are free. To my surprise, the text of the Sixth Commandment slightly changes from language to language, although they are interpreted in the same way. So in English it is said : *Thou Shalt not Commit Adultery*' whilst in Spanish and Italian it is *fornication* that is forbidden. According to Foucault, for Medieval theologians there are differences between adultery and fornication, which comprises three varieties : *the joining together of the two sexes; the second takes place without contact with woman, and the third is conceived in the mind and the thoughts....* later, he takes fornication in the restricted sense of '*caral conjunction*'. Others use "fornication covering all sexual offences and adultery covering those which infringe the marriage vows." Why each culture had chosen a different degree of fault to express the same prohibition is a question that goes far beyond the limits of this work.

<sup>3</sup> BENNET & FORGAN, 1991:4.

<sup>4</sup> My emphasis. RIBEIRO DE OLIVEIRA:11.

The periphrasis stressed the sacred character of the genital organs and reinforced the interdiction of masturbation – a never mentioned word in these manuals. To avoid troublesome sensations, these authors recommend that, when necessary, “girls should only touch herself quickly without excessive complacency, rather with the care and delicacy they use when cleaning a precious vase.”<sup>5</sup> This, notwithstanding, mothers must be alert to the signs which could reveal her if the child had learnt “harmful habits” from those “*badly-behaved friends*” who attracted children “to teach them everything they can.” The results are ‘those withered children – looking like crumpled paper with strained nerves, dull sight, incapable of intellectual work – the victims of that precocious disorder.’<sup>6</sup>

To prevent this, mothers were to stress the ideas of care and respect towards the body, which is sacred and must not be defiled, stressing modesty as the most perfect defence. The idea that the body is a temple was easily understood by children, because of the dogma of the Eucharist. They were taught that, when taking the Communion, they were in fact receiving the whole body and blood of Christ,<sup>7</sup> since 1533 a dogma for Catholics. Children were taught that Christ will inhabit a girl's body provided she stays in the state of grace; that is, provided she has not sinned. She would particularly ‘dirty’ her soul if the sin was against chastity. The language of chastity was also marked by the vocabulary of pollution and dirtiness: ‘sin is a stain which contaminates the whiteness of purity;’ “the virginal soul is like a petal of a white rose,” or it is like the finest Crystal, which once split, or broken, would never recover its perfection; perpetuating metaphors already used in medieval times.<sup>8</sup> So, there was no other way other than to cultivate modesty, the virtue that protects purity:

*The mother must show the children that modesty, this power that guards one's intimacies, is a sacred strength and a privilege of human beings. Animals don't know what modesty is because it is only a human instinct. That is why a person must cover and protect the most intimate parts of the body.*<sup>9</sup>

Therefore despite the valorisation of human body implicit in its elevation to a Holy Spirit temple, it was restrictive of behaviour, and a powerful way of inculcating guilt from an early age. The second step for that social construction, was the enrolment in a convent.

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<sup>5</sup> CARNOT, 1960:44.

<sup>6</sup> CARNOT, *ibid.*:87. All these circumlocution to speak about masturbation, a proscribed word, the great issue in the manuals and preaching for young men. It was also referred as ‘the solitary vice.’

<sup>7</sup> The conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the body and the wine into the blood of Christ is the doctrine of transubstantiation, distinct from Luther's doctrine of ‘Consubstantiation’.

<sup>8</sup> See chapter 2 of this thesis.

<sup>9</sup> RIBEIRO OLIVEIRA:11.

## *Convent Schools: An Intersection Between Religion, Gender And Class.*

Up to the 1950s the majority of Brazilian middle-class girls studied at schools ruled by nuns. Thus they shared an experience that seemed to unite Catholic girls all over the world by similar memories of their school days. Rosemary Forgan pointed out that

*[I]t was as if woman in religious orders, not just in Britain but all over the world, conspired to produce an identical female educational system that hardly changed by so much as a comma in 150 years. For decades the bird's eye view... must have been of nuns busying about in every corner of the globe, worrying and fussing over girl's hem lines, urging that unpalatable food be offered up for the souls in Purgatory, making sure their little charges were word perfect in the Catechism and, most important of all, alerting them to the perils in wait in that sin-sodden place, The Outside World.'*<sup>10</sup>

However, this 'unity' was developed in different social contexts. In Brazil, the majority of such schools had the middle- to upper-class girls as their public and very few were designed for the education of the lower classes.<sup>11</sup> There was even a hierarchy among those schools, according to the status of those who attended. These different milieus must be taken in account when speaking of this extraordinary similarity of behaviour. There were differences in social ethos and purpose despite these anecdotal aspects which give the appearance of uniformity of ethos and aims.

Some convents were very expensive boarding schools, exclusive and aristocratic.<sup>12</sup> In spite of their alleged academic purposes, they were represented as places where girls went to be schooled in femininity and acquire social accomplishments, thus the more select and exclusive they were, the better. For the ruling class, they were one of the mechanisms to maintain their 'exclusiveness'.<sup>13</sup> Thus, class difference was an issue very much present in the student's daily life. The stereotype was that nuns used to adulate rich students although contrary to their vows and religious spirit.<sup>14</sup> Popular representations stated that they courted the riches, and money was never enough for their requests.

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<sup>10</sup> BENNET & FORGAN, 1991.

<sup>11</sup> This was part of the politics of the church in Brazil. They concentrated their efforts in educating the elite to regain their power which they had lost with the proclamation of the Republic.

<sup>12</sup> They were represented as so expensive that people used to joke: 'just imagine if they weren't ruled by the sisters of charity. ( In Brazil, all nuns are generally known as 'sisters of charity')

<sup>13</sup> See NEEDEL, 1987:58- 59, on the creation of the Colégio Sion. It was created in 1888 "to instruct the daughters of the ruling families" when the efforts made to bring the more aristocratic nuns of the Sacré Coeur, to Brazil failed.

<sup>14</sup> Comments such as these could be easily subscribed to by Brazilian students: "Everybody knew that the teachers treated the kids who were dressed nice and all better the teachers all had their pets.... If you didn't have cute ringlets, an ironed new uniform, starched shirts, and a mother and father who gave money to the church, you weren't a teacher's pet and that meant you weren't encouraged." LUTRELL, 1993:505. This matches Maria Tereza Lacerda's account: Maria Tereza Lacerda reported that in her school rich girls were chosen 'The Queen of the Missions' because their "rich father



Commonly an orphanage was connected to the school, to house poor girls in charge of domestic chores. Their presence was just glimpsed ( "Orphan girls carrying two by two the huge litter bins, peeling potatoes and praying: the first Hail Mary, the second Hail Mary till the thirtieth, because their busy hands could not use the rosary").<sup>15</sup> They were kept apart from the paying students, to whom they should never speak, since each one "must know one's proper place."

Discrimination did not only affect those who were not so rich or had a higher social status. Although they accepted daughters of divorced parents, or single mothers in the name of charity, they were kept apart, and other girls were persuaded not to be their friends; there was a visible idea of pollution surrounding the members of 'irregular' families. Although the Church proclaimed that the children were not guilty for their parents' sins, actually the schools replicated the most widespread social prejudices against divorced families.<sup>16</sup>

In reality these schools aimed to build up a particular environment where the divine precepts (the indissolubility of marriage) and the 'divine order' could be preserved. The 'divine order' meant the acknowledgement that the differences between social classes are part of God's plan and generated particular duties for each one, such as compassionate philanthropy for the rich and blind loyalty towards the masters, for the poor.<sup>17</sup> To know one's proper place was also taken in its literal interpretation to be the prescription that persons from different social classes must be kept apart. Thus nuns were provided the girls with a model for their future homes, where divorced families should never be invited and people of socially 'inferior' rank should be separated: they should enter the buildings by a different entrance, and seldom leave their places of service (the gardens', the kitchen, the laundry) in a still enduring spatial discrimination.<sup>18</sup>

### *Routine And Hierarchy*

As in an ideal home, these schools were ruled by a 'mother' ( *Ma Mère, Nôtre Mère, Reverend Madre* depending on the particular usage of the convent), and nuns whom they called '*ma soeur*', 'sisters'<sup>19</sup> or '*irmãs*' constituting a ranking which culminated in the [male]

could send money to the poor Chinese children, producing the miracle of his daughter's perpetually good marks in examinations. MACEDO, 1982:19

<sup>15</sup>MACEDO, *ibid*

<sup>16</sup> Actually at that time there was no divorce in Brazil, just *desquite* - a kind of legal separation which did not allow a second marriage

<sup>17</sup> It was particularly reinforced in the novels from the 'Coleção Menina e Moça'. See chapter 5

<sup>18</sup> Brazilian houses are divided in 'social' and 'service' areas. The social areas are divided into 'social' (living and dining rooms) and 'intimate' parts ( bed and bathrooms.) See chapter 10.

<sup>19</sup> in Portuguese, *irmãs* was the most common way of calling them, out of the French schools.

Father confessor. Girls learned the appropriate behaviour to be directed at each one from the humble nuns in charge of the kitchen or the garden (the 'oblates' who had no dowry when they entered to the congregation) to the teaching nuns, to whom they gave a small curtsy, reserving a full curtsy to honour the Superior, whose office should be attended by the student in her gala uniform and white gloves, in some upper schools.<sup>20</sup>

In that feminine environment, the ultimate reference was the male priest, *Mon Père*. As the father at home, he was the ever present authority even when absent. If their command was seldom practised, their privileges were always guaranteed: "Père Dunand took so seriously his role that he always chose the best places and the best parts since God would not do differently."<sup>21</sup>

The students were also separated by ranks of age, size and maturity. Ribbons of different colours, or the number of little stars, or different badges marked their position and the rooms they should share, and anticipated their duties over the younger students and even privileges in relation to them. Convent routine was punctuated by the rhythm of the religious calendar which established special devotion to certain days and months,<sup>22</sup> and daily life had the same invariable routine punctuated by bells calling them to rise, to pray, to attend the daily Mass, to eat, to study and to rest.<sup>23</sup> It was a whole environment created to inculcate a deep sense of order, hierarchy and mysticism embodied in a particular feature of femininity: There were days for fasting or just for abstinence from meat, and the mandatory three days of annual retirement when everyone spent days at prayers or meditations, observing total silence. Everything had the ultimate aim of directing the girls towards domestic life, in the middle- to upper-class manner.<sup>24</sup> The observation of an ex-alumnus of Sion at the turn of the century was still true in the 1950s:

*Simplicity, discipline, even austerity, did not exclude distinction and good taste. Life was made as rhythmic as a piece of music, to the sonorous ringing of the great bell! What harmony, in the cohesion of that society in miniature! In the observance of the hierarchy, in a respectful obedience, which did not diminish one, because she who exercised it was thereby*

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<sup>20</sup> So great should be the respect paid to the Superior that in the festivities made in her honour, the students should sit facing the Superior, backs turned to the stage where a show of poems and songs would be presented. To prevent the girls turning their heads to see the show, they attended it the day before. It was reported to be the norm at the *Sacré Coeur de Jesus*, in the 1950s. Personal communication.

<sup>21</sup> Maria De Lourdes Suplicy in MACEDO, 1982:10. The analogy with the status of the father in family is stressed here. The father's privileges are common for he is the head of the family. In poor families the best portions and the meat, are also privilege of the men, who were the breadwinner and thus need to have the strength to hard work.

<sup>22</sup> The first Friday was devoted to the souls in Purgatory, May was the month of Mary, June was dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and October was the time of making sacrifices and raising money for the Holy Missions

<sup>23</sup> Maria De Lourdes Suplicy in MACEDO, 1982:14.

<sup>24</sup> SMITH, 1981:165 - 168.

*cultivated, and that linked the girl to the mestra de classe, the Sisters to the Superior, and all in the same spirit.*<sup>25</sup>

Hierarchies – such as those between husband and wife, parents and children, housewife and servants – and routine would be the raw material of the student's future domestic life. Both the routine of a 'work which is never done' (by the domestic servants under the lady's supervision); and the sense of hierarchy, which would smooth the relationships in the family bringing harmony, meant that everyone remembered their place, their duties and privileges. Geraldo Pires de Sousa advised housewives to fix domestic rites to "make Christian habits and a Christian conscience flourish in their children" pointing the routine of the convents as the best examples for it ("the establishment of its habits, its discipline... the architecture of the cloisters: the large communal rooms, its furniture... everything was made to impregnate the souls with religious sentiments"). Likewise, the lady of the house

*must keep stable those domestic rites: fixed as the fences around the house, immutable as the house decoration, or the place of furniture and the location of the rooms. They must be like an in-built part of home. Stability keeps everyone together. Capricious changes bring ruin to the home, leading its members to individualism, to constant quarrels, to disunion. These rites alleviate the continual command: authority is a delicate issue, which can be easily lost. An old cautious precept teaches us to avoid too many orders to keep one's authority. Thus fixed habits smoothly lead the children to do their duties, without the need of any command.*<sup>26</sup>

And the same author waxed lyrical about his feelings: "What a rich educational factor is a well organised house under a Christian domestic order."

### *Self-Denial And Discipline*

Discipline and self-denial were considered important attributes of the female behaviour whose achievement was emphasised through the making of little sacrifices. These were meant to guide the pupils on the paths of sanctity ("contributing for a quick way to God's Kingdom without passing through Purgatory")<sup>27</sup> whilst at the same time training them to bear their burden in life.

*From the education I received at the convent I gained this sense of responsibility, auto-discipline, respect for the other, religious conscience and over all an incredible will power to surpass any obstacle I could face in life.*<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Quoted by NEEDEL, 1987:61.

<sup>26</sup> SOUSA, 1958:285.

<sup>27</sup> LACERDA, 1991:9.

<sup>28</sup> Suzy Queiroz Lambach, in MACEDO 1982:24. See also BENNET & FORGAN, 1991.

Self-denial was learned from the motivation to make sacrifices such as not chatting with friends, not smiling.<sup>29</sup> Girls were encouraged to give away the small treats for the sake of God, or for the salvation of souls.<sup>30</sup> For the sake of God girls could walk with pebbles in their shoes,<sup>31</sup> or stay with open arms whilst praying the rosary, a position hard to endure for the long time of the prayers;<sup>32</sup> More than self-inflicting pain these sacrifices were regarded as a way to achieve self-discipline, self control and will power – attributes which constituted the feminine strength that was women’s domestic form of heroism.<sup>33</sup>

Several times in their future life they were believed to deeply need this strength either to gently resist the [sexual] appeals of their boy friends; to keep their family together on the strait path of morality and religion, or to accomplish their familial goals. These aspirations required discipline and a mother could only ask it from her family if she herself had it in abundance. Such a woman would have total control over her family and home.

One moment symbolically embodied women’s strength and put it to the test: childbirth. The motto : ‘suffer and be still’ seems to be widely interpreted as a sign of ‘true womanhood’ or even of ‘true ladyhood.’<sup>34</sup> Confinement is a recurrent theme in woman’s chatting – its development, duration, difficulties and problems – details used to stress one’s own stoic behaviour.<sup>35</sup> For middle- to upper-class women, only ill-educated women could not refrain from showing their sufferings,<sup>36</sup> since it also represented self-discipline cultivated at the convents taken to its limit.

### *‘Behind A Great Man...’*

A woman’s role was supposed to be one of total support for her husband. Her place should always be on the sidelines, aiming for public ‘invisibility’. This raises questions about

<sup>29</sup> LACERDA, 1991:9

<sup>30</sup> “During May – Mary’s month – it was suggested that we make a sacrifice putting [the dessert] on Our Lady’s altar” Maria De Lourdes Suplicy in MACEDO, 1982 :15.

<sup>31</sup> OLIVEIRA:10

<sup>32</sup> LACERDA, 1991:9.

<sup>33</sup> See chapter 4, for the analysis of female heroism in folk-tales and romantic novels.

<sup>34</sup> At the end of the 1940s, a scandalised male writer regretted the news “about research carried out in Russia and North America aimed to suppress pain in childbirth.” See chapter 8

<sup>35</sup> It was a recurrent theme in the interviews that I made for an early research (OLIVEIRA e SILVA 1985). In an American novel there is the dialogue between a woman in delivery and the nurse: “The woman next door helped herself” the nurse chimed in... ‘She screamed’ said Candy contemptuously. I heard her. She screamed and screamed. And I won’t scream, I won’t, I won’t !... Go on have a little scream, she coaxed. [...] I’d be so ashamed for John...’ Candy whispered..... Later there was a dialogue between Candy’s friend and a woman sitting beside her: “ ‘My daughter had her baby last night...’She must have been the one who screamed thought Claudia... ‘My daughter is separated’, said the woman...” ( Rose Franken *From Claudia to David*:239...244/245). Perhaps that is why that woman had no reason to refrain from screaming, is the implicit message of the scene.

<sup>36</sup> They could also mirror themselves in the stories about saints who suffered excruciating pains with a smile in their lips for ‘God’s sake.’ Stories that were told several times in the convents.

the embodiment of such characteristics. It is the hypothesis of this thesis that this process came in part through the over-valorisation of the things which were not supposed to be seen. These things were considered as the key to an evaluation of a woman's job well done.

For instance, the expertise of the embroiderer was demonstrated by the other side of the handicraft piece, which must be so well done so as to be indistinguishable from the right side. The care of the couturier is revealed by the small size of the whip-stitches that finish in the inside part of the outfits; the quality of the maid's job is evidenced by the whiteness of any and every fabric used for kitchen cleaning; and by the tidiness of the kitchen. It is important to note that beyond hygiene and order, such things were invested with moral value and deeply linked to a kind of housewifery which in the end was supposed to be the religious mission of good 'family girls.'<sup>37</sup>

In a similar way, a real lady was known for the attention she paid to the invisible details of her daily life: the smartness of her lingerie and bed clothes; the little bags full of frills, laces and ribbons used for collecting her little private articles, the tidiness of her drawers and so on.<sup>38</sup> Bonnie Smith has pointed out that keeping the house tidy, that is, taming nature which dirties and spoils the domestic environment, was a symbolic form of preventing the moral or social chaos which also derived from an untamed human nature.<sup>39</sup> This was the housewife's supreme duty, as the guardian of the spiritual capital of the family and, by extension, the whole society.<sup>40</sup>

The appropriate fulfilment of a woman's daily duties also valorised the smallest, simple things associating them with the spirit of Christ who favoured the small and invisible

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<sup>37</sup> An eloquent example is given by this commentary of a middle-class mother in a interview in a previous research of the author: "My daughter is very fond of parties, of being smartly dressed, so that one might think she was a very frivolous person. However, she is a very good housewife. If they could just have a look at the tidiness of her tea towels, the shine of the small pieces of her stove, or open her wardrobe and drawers...for sure they would be quite surprised and would change their minds."

<sup>38</sup> Girl's literature of that time was full of such examples, which underlined the distinction between the well bred girls and the others. For instance: "the two sisters who were always smartly dressed to go out, wore mended and untidy clothes at home..". DIVONNE, *O Marido da Borradeira* [Cendrillon's husband' ];207- 209 (as in the fairy tale, these were by contrast the bad sisters). "Grandmother always said that a real lady, no matter how poor she may be, must wear fine lingerie, even if she could not afford buying a new dress." Elinor Glyn *O Diário de uma Aristocrata* [ Reflections of Ambrosine]:10. See also Elinor Glyn, *O Diário de Evangelina* [ The Vicissitudes of Evangeline]

<sup>39</sup> SMITH, 1981. Although she is analysing the ethos of French ladies at the end of the nineteenth century, I believe that the analogy is reasonable. These ladies had also been educated by nuns of the same congregations which later came to Brazil to become teachers for the middle to upper classes. Until the Second Vatican Concilium in the 1960s, there was no substantial change in the nuns' world view, in their preaching, or in the routine they established at the convents.

<sup>40</sup> The idea that woman is responsible for the spiritual capital of the family was developed into Victorian times as part of the ideal of domesticity. A woman should be 'the angel of the house,' transforming home in a haven and by extension being responsible for the spiritual legacy of society. See, among others, DOUGLAS,1978; HALL,1979; WELTERS,1966; MATHEWS,1987. Although in a totally different context the cult of domesticity was also transplanted to Brazil. For the critique of such transplantation see NEEDEL,1987. For an analysis of this process in a small town in the centre eastern Brazil in the 1980s, see OLIVEIRA E SILVA, 1985.

(to other's) affirmations of love to him. Nuns also valued the little gestures that denoted a sense of economy ("mend your cloth and it will endure for another year; mend it again and it will last another month," or "keep the thread used in basting so that you may use it in the hem of your skirt. "<sup>41</sup>) even if they represented almost nothing compared with the expensive cost of studying in such a school, or the lavish life style of some of their students' families. The intention more than the practical result was their goal.<sup>42</sup> Again, these habits were replicated in the little sacrifices made in secret for the conversion of pagans, or the salvation of the souls in Purgatory.

After Thérèse of Lisieux's *Little Way*,<sup>43</sup> such acts could be compared to the heroic gestures of the saints, and to their moral virtues of selflessness and humility. The violet stood as the symbol of those virtues 'that small ordinary flower which grows hidden by the leaves, and never remains unnoticed because of its remarkable perfume.' This was the supreme ideal of every Christian woman's life.

It is my hypothesis that this over valuation of the smallest unseen details, was intrinsically part of the feminine ethos for the middle to upper classes in the Brazilian 1950s. It constituted the feminine apprenticeship not only for being 'behind the great man', but also for longing for such opportunity and believing that it was the better way to self realisation.

## *A Feminine Style*

Convents are reputed to school girls better in femininity, but what did 'becoming more feminine...' mean ? Femininity was defined by contrast to masculine attributes. Hence, since men are supposed to be rational, by opposition women should be very sentimental, compassionate, delicate and sensitive. The whole on convent atmosphere exacerbated these feminine feelings steeping them in sentimentalism, or sensibility "gone rancid" in Ann Douglas's words.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Respectively in Portuguese: "*Remenda o teu pano e ele durará mais um ano; remenda outra vez e ele durará mais um mês*" (quoted by Maria De Lourdes Suplicy in MACEDO, 1982:15 ) and "*Com a linha que se tira dos alinhavos pode se fazer a bainha da saia.*" ( in *A Mulher que Conquistou o Brasil. Jornal da Tarde* 27/4/85.)

<sup>42</sup> Similarly 'for the late nineteenth century women, domestic austerity played almost solely a symbolic role in lives rich in symbolic content. It inflicted small sacrifices that would produce compensating luxuries... By this time the notion of domestic economy was a sham, relating to nothing substantial in actual economic practice. All gamish, all symbol, the well kept account book stood for the presence of a woman concerned with her family and her domestic charge. In the case of many such women the account book and its contradictions rivalled the use of a bow, a jewel, a modulated voice as a female sign. SMITH, 1981:73-74.

<sup>43</sup> She preached that the right performance of smallest duties of the daily life, in the name of God was her little way to salvation. It was also more within the reach of ordinary people (chiefly housewives) than the heroic gestures of martyrs.

<sup>44</sup> DOUGLAS, 1978.

There was even a sentimental kitsch-like religious aesthetic perfected at convents with medals, coloured plaster images, holy pictures, candles and profusion of flowers<sup>45</sup> which would later be replicated in the lavish decoration of the students' future home.<sup>46</sup> The devotion to *Santa Therezinha* (Thérèse of Lisieux) was particularly enfolded in a sugary feminine- atmosphere, stressed by the name of the saint, always used in its diminutive form.<sup>47</sup> The attachment to the accessories of religion also reinforced that sentimental religiosity.<sup>48</sup>

It also signalled emasculation of the Catholic aesthetic rather than the incorporation of a feminine style of Religion, as sought by feminist theologian today. Catholicism as a whole is a more sensory religion as opposed to the rationalisation of Protestantism,<sup>49</sup> and this sentimental religion was exacerbated by the whole atmosphere of the convents. The devotion to Mary emphasise the more 'feminine' aspects of religion. The Virgin and the saints were not distant and unknown persons, since their pictures were collected, exchanged with friends, used among the pages of books and their images in plaster of Paris abounded. They were associated with particular symbols, colours and flowers.<sup>50</sup> Each one had its own

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<sup>45</sup> The modernist religious aesthetic was limited to the more intellectual elite or the more advanced sectors influenced by the liturgical movement, and had not penetrated down to the convent level attended by the middle classes. (See chapter 1 of this thesis). It is important to note that besides the distinction between different religious orders, there were also differences between the masculine and feminine branches within the orders. As a rule, the feminine branches - chiefly the ones dedicated to private schools - tended to be more conservative than their masculine counterparts.

<sup>46</sup> However, it is not possible to conceive of a mechanical link between traditional and advanced religious understanding and the corresponding aesthetic conception. Probably people administered these apparently opposite conceptions in their daily lives, I remember the comments about a fact which can exemplify this:

A very religious, rich family from an association of Catholic couples (thus very much influenced by the Liturgical Movement) contracted an architect to project a modernist house with up-to-date decoration at the end of the 1950s. Of course, there were several 'liturgical [appropriate] images' throughout the house. Although the lady-of-the-house agreed with everything, much to the architect's exasperation she requested firmly that a huge, conventional, polychromatic image of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus should be 'enthroned' in the living room, in order to stress the consecration of the house/family to Him. A modernist image of Jesus would not achieve this. She thus, reconcile her adherence to advanced and intellectual Catholic sectors with her prior traditional and popular devotions, and their corresponding religious aesthetic.

<sup>47</sup> Diminutives are usually associated with children, but it is also regarded as a more sentimental, delicate and affectionate form of language. Hence its identification with femininity.

<sup>48</sup> *The Holy Communion frocks, the petals and processions, the veils and holy water, and lighting of candles, and pretty little holy pictures of Saint Maria Goretti exchanged with friends, with tender little sentiments on the back.* Mary Kenny in BENNET & FORGAN, 1991:126.

<sup>49</sup> According to Barbara Corrado Pope, this opposition was particularly stressed in the nineteenth century, as part of Pius IX's ultramontism and its strategies of struggle against the modern world: *Pius and his immediate successors advocated new or renewed devotions that emphasised the affective rather than the rational or ethical aspects of faith...The adoration of the Eucharist, the Sacred Heart of Jesus and Mary were emotional cults fully supported by the papacy. [They] were personally devoted to the veneration of the Virgin. They approved coronations, whereby old statues of Mary received crowns in impressive ceremonies. They also confirmed the validity of new apparitions and miracles, and granted special indulgences for mass pilgrimages.* POPE 1987:184. These devotional practices and even the coronation of the Virgin in May are still very common in Brazil. For the coronation of the Virgin, see OLIVEIRA SILVA, 1985.

<sup>50</sup> Popular devotions of the Virgin and her numerous denominations— each one with its own configuration, symbols, colour of the garments, and specific ornaments — were believed to name different saints, since they are also celebrated

'specialisation,' to whom women prayed for their little needs: Saint Anthony to get a good suitor; Saint Rita, for impossible graces; Saint Peter, for a second marriage "Nossa Senhora do Bom Parto"<sup>51</sup> for protection in labour. Mothers prayed to Saint Monique who had a better understanding of problematic children.<sup>52</sup> Women learned to deal with saints who sent flowers as sign of the bestowing of graces,<sup>53</sup> who were cajoled with bits of soap,<sup>54</sup> who were ashamed of the bad behaviour of girls, since the boundaries of religion and superstition could be quite fluid. Even the presence of 'Almighty God' was frequently remembered.

*God's eye GOD SEES ME strategically painted in every classroom, corridor, dormitory, dining hall, and WC, perpetually watched us. An indiscreet God who even knew how many hairs fell from our heads.*<sup>55</sup>

This feminine religion was also peopled with symbols flowers and animals which would supply women with tangible models for their expected virtues.<sup>56</sup> The meaning of those symbols and the legends of saints, notwithstanding, had changed historically, dismissing its more vigorous aspects in order to establish the acceptable passive model of Femininity.<sup>57</sup> Even Christian virtues, supposed to be universal, are also gendered, as this account about the Virgin Mary testifies

*Of the theological virtues only charity (faith and hope omitted); of the cardinal, only prudence (no fortitude, justice, temperance). Humility, patience, obedience, compassion, purity, truth, praise and poverty all take their place around Mary.... [it] demonstrates the cleavage between feminine and masculine, between passive and active that had divided society into symbolic camps along sexual lines.*<sup>58</sup>

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on different dates. For the blue as the colour of Virgin Mary's cloak see WARNER, 1985:266 for the political manipulation of this colour see POPE, 1987.

<sup>51</sup> Our Lady of the Good Delivery.' In Brazil, Saint Margareth's aid is particularly invoked to help the expulsion of the placenta.

<sup>52</sup> Saint Augustine's mother. See ATKINSON, 1987.

<sup>53</sup> It was believed that someone would spontaneously give a rose to those who had prayed to Saint Therezinha asking for a grace as a sign that the saint would bestow it.

<sup>54</sup> For clearing clouded days one should give a bit of soap, and a small basin with water to Saint Clara, because "as soon as she finishes washing her clothes she will want a sunny day to dry them."

<sup>55</sup> LACERDA, 1991:9, Sometimes it was represented by a triangle with a big eye inside.

<sup>56</sup> Among others, the pelican symbolising motherly sacrifice; bees and ants, the housewife's work; and flowers which were more directly linked to feminine virtues: violets representing modesty and humility; the lily, for chastity; the rose for beauty and the daisy for simplicity.

<sup>57</sup> The case of Saint Margaret is emblematic of such manipulations. According to Rosiska Parker her legend tells that the devil had appeared to her disguised as a dragon, which swallowed the saint. "Within the beast's body the cross that Margaret had made took shape, expanded and finally splits the dragon open allowing Margaret to escape unharmed [...] the saint prayed that the memory of her escape from the dragon might support woman in childbirth. Rosiska Parker states that from the nineteenth century on, the story of Saint Margaret has slightly changed [She] had been transformed from dragon slayer to victim...and her role as patron saint of childbirth is attributed as much to her acute sufferings as to her escape from the devil. Saint Margaret started to be remembered for her passivity and helplessness and her name "bestowed on that little lowly flower we call the daisy" Accordingly, the symbolism of the lily has also changed. PARKER, 1984:36. In Brazilian folklore she helps in the case of a difficult expulsion of the placenta.

<sup>58</sup> WARNER, 1985:185.



## *The Power Of The Weak*

Such exacerbation of sentimentalism as inherent to the feminine ethos:<sup>59</sup> Sentimentalism stresses the incapacity of women to exercise public power. Common-sense affirms that woman is 'heart ridden' in such a way that would be incompatible with a position of public authority.<sup>60</sup> Therefore sentimentalism goes *pari passu* with impediments to formal political power that require reason, impassivity, inflexibility, a perception of the universal rather than the particular in short all the qualities which women were not supposed to have. Thus, convent education led women to public 'marginalization.' However, the apprenticeship of that particular form of living the feminine role also opened space for the exercise of informal political power that is power exercised by indirect means.<sup>61</sup>

These ideas also prove the veracity behind the common-sense belief that girls educated at convents learned to 'dissimulate.' Dissimulation is part of the expected behaviour which a woman should have to retain power over the family, being even a virtue invested with the positive idea of the '*jeitinho*'<sup>62</sup> ( in this sense a special knack to get what one wants). So the deeper meaning of the phrase is unveiled: 'behind a great man' there is the influence of a woman skilled in fully performing informal political power. In this sense the sugaring stimulated in convents was part of the apprenticeship of such skills: a special inflection of the voice "the breathy vocalisation of poor-little-rich-girl helplessness;"<sup>63</sup> the balance between the convenience of just dropping one or bursting into tears; of manipulating the scale from the sullen to the silent outrageous rage. These were considered efficient ways of imposing their will over the family, of exercising their 'informal' power sometimes on the boundaries of tyranny in a subtle, 'sweet' and indirect way.

Speaking about the Christian precept of woman's submission to her husband, Monique Levallet-Montal uses plain terms as if it were one of these little feminine secrets of women; to alert her readers

*Here, we must say in a low voice and just between us even accepting this law and abstaining from breaking it (which would be going against divine precept) there are ways of turning it round. A woman has a smart and tender way; a loyal and clever diplomacy for, little by little, and in a thousand of ways, making the husband abdicate from his unlimited rule. Everyday a clever woman can make peaceful usurpation of his power. If its goal is a better order and happiness for the family, God naturally will regard with*

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<sup>59</sup> For the U.S American case, see DOUGLAS, 1978.

<sup>60</sup> In some contexts it is taken as a virtue, foreseeing the advantages of having a country ruled by women.

<sup>61</sup> For a discussion about power as a capillary system pervading society, see FOUCAULT, 1979. For an analysis of women's power see FRY, 1974; MARTIN, 1984. QUINN, 1977 provides a review essay about women and power.

<sup>62</sup> For an analysis of the '*jeitinho*' supposed to be part of Brazilian ethos, see BARBOSA, 1992; DAMATTA, 1986. For the feminine *jeitinho* see BASSANEZI, 1993.

<sup>63</sup> BROWNMILLER, 1984:86.

*indulgence such usurpation of men's power.*<sup>64</sup>

The author warns that the future wife must start to prepare herself for this task very early in her life. She must cultivate her intelligence and her will, if she wants equality in sharing power in the family. And that is the education she would receive in convent schools. This problematises the idea of a rigid dichotomy between power and submission in the relationship of man and woman since this dichotomy omits the manipulation of power, and its instances of negotiation. Again it underlines the idea of the power of the weak, which is always surreptitious and marginal to the formal instances of power.<sup>65</sup>

### *The Human Body At Convent Schools*

In addition to sentimentalism, convent schools exacerbated the issues of purity and chastity creating an environment of scruples and guilt. Despite the more positive changes in the Catholic doctrine regarding the human body, progress in the convents had been markedly slower. More than in any other domain, convents had best preserved attitudes rooted in the early Fathers' prejudiced utterances – their extreme contempt for the body and sexuality, which matched the way they treated their own bodies.

Up to the Second Vatican Concilium, in the 1960s, nuns covered their bodies to completely disguise any feminine characteristic.<sup>66</sup> They demanded from their boarding students similar attitudes – uniforms had long skirts, long sleeves, large blouses, and thick dark stockings. Besides, the students were not supposed to see their own bodies even when bathing, echoing in the twentieth century the advice of Saint Jerome, from the fourth century:

*"I disapprove altogether of baths in the case of a full-grown virgin. She ought to blush at herself and be unable to look at her own nakedness."*<sup>67</sup>

Thus the girls had to use a long gown for their weekly bath,<sup>68</sup> which astonished the Brazilian public, because it was opposed to its old habits,<sup>69</sup> as revealed in these recollections about a traditional school ruled by French nuns:

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<sup>64</sup> My emphasis. LEVALLET-MONTAL, 1955:49-50; CARNOT (1960) also suggests "you must learn how to use your skills to make your opinion prevail. Do it tactfully without letting him know that you are interested in it. "

<sup>65</sup> FRY, 1974.

<sup>66</sup> A nun's habit usually included 'a skullcap weighted with coil, starched supports and the final long veil' over a shaved head; plus a long skirt, a scapular and a cape. The scapular - a sleeveless robe worn as an outer garment helped to disguise any sign of the breast, already tightly tied up. And the skullcap was also tightly tied 'to restrain the imagination' and to prevent any side view. With variations of colours, shape of the guimpe and form of the veils, these elements taken from 'The Nun's Story' matched the habit of almost all congregations of nuns, before the Concilium in the 1960s.

<sup>67</sup> St. Jerome quoted by ATKINSON, 1983 :134; see also RUETHER, 1979:169 - 171.

<sup>68</sup> This fact is referred in the Introduction of BENNET & FORGAN, 1991:5; and also by JARDIM, 1973:78-79. GABEIRA, 1982:31, Maria Tereza Lacerda in MACEDO, 1982:19.

*They asked for 'a long gown for bathing' in the school layette, My father let the Superior known his strongly disapproval: My daughters are not used to bath fully clothed! The nuns put aside both exigencies: the costume and bath twice a week. They let me take a daily bath and commented surprised: Imaginez! Elle change de pantalons tous les jours!*<sup>69</sup>

This practice which was the general norm until the 1950s was gradually abandoned during the decade. This contempt for the body had as result the learning of a repertory of ritualised gestures for hygiene routine and even for changing clothes, as this description reveals:

*The space between the beds in the dormitory was very narrow. However, the girls should kneel, and with the lights off, their prayers aloud, they should exchange the uniforms for long cotton night-gowns. Saying Hail Marys we slipped off the sleeves and the shirt, then we put on the gown and, standing up, let the skirt drop down the floor. At that point the lights were switched on.*<sup>71</sup>

Another concept of Saint Jerome was behind one more bizarre exigency of some convents: “women heavy with child are a revolting sight.” The severity of the rule was not common in the 1950s anymore. However there was still rumours about convents where pupil's pregnant mothers were prohibited to be present at the school festivities. These facts illustrate the secular endurance of the patriarchs' accounts displaying their fear and contempt of a woman's body. It is amazing how such prejudices could remain on a conscious or unconscious level for so many centuries, despite the evolution of Catholic ideology about woman and sexuality.<sup>72</sup>

The prejudiced identification of sex and sin also transformed sex into the “forbidden [highly desirable, unmentionable] fruit.” Not speaking about it had the effect of making sex ever-present in the environment, developing guilt and scruples in pupils' mind. To the environment of convents Rachel Jardim's comment could easily be applied – at these places there was the voluptuousness of asceticism and the silent ever-present education about sexuality.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> In Brazil the immersion in a bath is used more for children, or it is seen as 'a luxury one can indulge in once in a while' or it is 'a therapeutic thing' that one seldom needs to use.

<sup>70</sup> Maria De Lourdes Suplicy in MACEDO, 1982:16.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.:16.

<sup>72</sup> As Eleanor McLaughlin pointed out, patriarchal accounts had been reinterpreted in the medieval age and spread through “variegated popular beliefs, unarticulated assumptions and prejudices” which remained alive and influenced daily habits and customs.

<sup>73</sup> The journalist Mary Kenny resumes the situation: *I think the nuns were ambivalent because while they talked a lot about chastity and modesty and shunning 'the occasion of sin', they unconsciously also portrayed sexuality as a garden of delights.* BENNET & FORGAN, 1991:127.

## *Educational Matters*

Even following the minimum curriculum approved by the Brazilian state, nuns favoured the teaching of humanities rather than sciences or mathematics, and everything was taught in the same way as abilities to be learned by heart, rather than issues to be understood. Their ideas about purity and innocence also influenced on their teaching of some issues. It is emblematic that the 1970s the Biology courses at some convents still omitted the study of the reproductive and the excretory apparatus in classes about anatomy,<sup>74</sup> and to avoid embarrassing questions nuns used to demand parents that the corresponding pages of the books should be removed.<sup>75</sup> In the best medieval tradition nuns would prefer that God had not given to the human body functions and needs that approximated humankind to animals. Therefore, the best way to deal with the body was to make believe that it did not exist.

Education in convents paralleled the viewpoint of the authors of religious manuals who defined that girls education should be restricted to 'spiritual culture', which brings moral improvement, thus elevating her accomplishment of domestic duties. Nowhere is the prescribed feminine role which makes woman a subordinate and relational person more visible than in this issue, since woman should 'cultivate her spirit' to educate her children, to stimulate her husband with 'intelligent and attractive talk.'

This point is very well illustrated in popular novels, as in these examples of M. Delly's:<sup>76</sup> The heroes often show their scorn for the 'femmes savantes'<sup>77</sup> whilst the heroines are intellectually well endowed in foreign languages, music, art, fine embroidery - the mandatory feminine accomplishments since Victorian times.<sup>78</sup> However, the heroine is never pedantic, in spite of being the only woman to have such accomplishments. Her

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<sup>74</sup> The first was simply ignored whilst the second, for being linked with the digestive apparatus could not be easily banned. Thus in their teaching, food stopped as soon as it reached the bowels.

<sup>75</sup> Personal communications to the author.

<sup>76</sup> Another good example is the novel '*Uma Moça de Hoje*' [*Arlette, Jeune Fille Moderne*] where the heroine who is preparing to take her '*baccalauréat*' had to give it up to care for her mother who had become severely ill. At the beginning, the heroine has only one aim, to pass the examinations and becoming a lawyer, for her all that mattered was 'freedom, and independence' - identified with modernity. The novel is the account of the slow 'growing up' of the heroine towards 'the things that really matter in life,' that is love and marriage. For the analysis of these novels see chapter 5 of this thesis.

<sup>77</sup> For instance: He trembled with disgust hearing that Lisa had also studied Latin. "You will please me by forgetting it, won't you ? There is nothing better for making woman pedantic than Latin. By the way, I think you have been schooled enough. Hopefully there is still time to put an end to it." M Delly *Escrava ou Rainha* [Esclave ou Reine]:51.

<sup>78</sup> Several of them had 'a kind of ability which her husband or husband-to-be needs to accomplish a task, such as calligraphy or a talent for deciphering old manuscripts that is, things which were considered as woman's skills for their patience and greater attention to detail. For instance: "For him Valdez's service seemed indispensable for that job since none of his secretaries had been able to decipher the old French, sometimes incorrect, written in those yellowish pages." M Delly '*Entre Deux Almas*' (Entre Deux Ames) :143.

knowledge is directed to that spiritual culture which helps her to educate brothers and sisters anticipating her role as a mother. Moreover, because of her knowledge, from within the domestic domain she will be able to help her husband 'to succeed in the outside world,'<sup>79</sup> in the same way Gertrud von le Fort prescribes.<sup>80</sup> From the moment the hero is convinced of the higher purposes of her education, he will guide her learning, choosing proper books, teaching her Art, History, Music. It is little wonder that the authors of romantic novels always used the words 'master', 'masterful', 'mastering' in relation to the hero.

Likewise, convents were less interested in developing women's capacities for formal knowledge, than in giving them a superficial acquaintance in some matters and a general culture to serve as a gloss for their future as ladies. Parents were sure that their daughters could not become intellectually brilliant, but they certainly would not embarrass their husbands in any milieu. As Fernando Gabeira observed:

*The 'Colégio Santa Marcelina...ruled by some obscurantist Italian nuns, was the ideal vehicle for a good marriage. There the library was permanently closed, but the girls were skilled in eating oranges with knife and fork.'*<sup>81</sup>

## *A Modern Counterpoint To The Education In The Convents*

### *The Girl Guides Movement*

Some of the convent girls joined the Girl Guides Movement, what counterbalance the strict education provided by the convents. Guiding aimed to provide experiences for young woman that would teach them how to become self-reliant, independent, expeditious - someone capable of facing any challenge posed by daily life.<sup>83</sup> However, as the movement had gradually been attached to the Catholic Church, it was as if they were building an equivalent feminine model going by a different educational path.

The creation of the Girl Guides Movement in Brazil<sup>84</sup> in the 1920s provided the Church with another front for its policy of educating the elite to form a Catholic ruling class.

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<sup>79</sup> The heroines always have many domestic skills. The heroes, a distinct talent for business. Men travel on long trips like Ulysses whilst the heroines as modern Penelopes remain in the castle painting or embroidering. PRADO, 1981:94.

<sup>80</sup> See chapter 4 of this thesis.

<sup>81</sup> GABEIRA, 1982:30.

<sup>82</sup> I was a Girl Guide leader from 1959 to 1962. Therefore, most of the information here is a knowledge gained from having been part of the movement.

<sup>83</sup> It is possible to make an analogy to the nineteenth century ideal of Real Womanhood. See COGAN, 1989.

<sup>84</sup> Its creation in Brazil was part of Lady Olive Baden Powell's plans for the world-wide expansion of the movement. (She was the founder of Scouting, Lord Baden Powell's wife and substituted his sister Agnes as the Chief Commissioner of

This was an informal way of educating women for the best accomplishment of their 'natural' role, as had been envisaged by Agnes Baden Powell

*[Guiding] is a feminine movement – a womanly scheme in the best sense of the word [...] – Education will be on such lines only as will make the girl better housewives, more capable in all womanly arts, from cooking, washing and sick nursing to the training and management of children.*<sup>85</sup>

The Guiding Movement in Brazil started with eleven members, and reached its zenith in the 1950s. After the radical changes which were proposed at the beginning of the 1960s the Movement gradually lost its importance in Brazil.<sup>86</sup> Since its beginning it was greatly influenced by the Catholic intellectual elite and envisaged as a movement for middle- to upper-class girls, whose goal should be the formation of disciplined and patriotic good mothers.<sup>87</sup> In this sense it was a very conservative movement. However, it introduced new elements into girls' daily lives which were seen to be very modern.<sup>88</sup> At a time when single girls had very little autonomy, and seldom went out without a parent or relative to dance or on small trips, excursions and camps led by girls barely older than themselves, were quite revolutionary. Hence, Guiding can be considered part of the conservative modernisation process in relation to woman's position in society.<sup>89</sup> That is to say, it promoted the maintenance of the traditional structure while absorbing modernistic elements, without actually changing women's traditional role.<sup>90</sup>

The presence of leading figures of the educational field among its counsellors led the Guides to take their educational role to a level deeper than that Baden Powell had

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the women's version of that youth movement in 1916. Eighteen months later she took the title of World Chief Guide) The first meeting in Brazil was in 1919, at the house of an elite family of British origin. To that meeting some politicians, high society families and the most senior hierarchy of the Catholic Church in Rio were invited..

<sup>85</sup> Agnes Baden Powell, *Home Notes*, 25 August 1910. Quoted by DYHOUSE, 1985: 111. Agnes Baden Powell adapted the movement for girls, trying to avoid its military aspects, and to dismiss the accusation that the Movement promoted tomboyish behaviour.

<sup>86</sup> Research about the numbers of members in Brazil shows that its decrease started at the turn of the 1970s. However, ex-Guides interviewed by MOTTA (1988:60-61) are unanimous in putting this decline at the beginning of the 1960s. One of the proposed changes was to transform Guiding into a grassroots movement following the vanguard of the Church, which was promoting a '*preferential option for the poor*' at the time. At this point, Guiding lost its appeal for the elite girls. I believe that the conflicts generated by the changes in the movement plus the gradual absence of the elite, more than a visible decrease in the number of members, is responsible for the decline in the 1960s.

This ran counter Agnes Baden Powell intentions to target the working girl. There was a belief that the earning of regular wages by very young working ladies would give them a 'precocious independence'. Thus youth clubs would prevent them from undertaking 'unsuitable leisure-time occupations'. DYHOUSE, 1985: 105.

<sup>88</sup> The deep changes in the habits of middle to upper-class girls also helped to change the target members of the Guiding Movement in Brazil. Camping which was regarded a sign of freedom and modernity attached to Guiding in the 1950s, became just a cheap form of tourism for lower-class girls in the 1970s and 1980s. 'Moças da Zona Norte garantem a tradição das *Bandeirantes*.' *Jornal do Brasil*, 17/8/86:14.

<sup>89</sup> For an analysis of that process for the inter-war period see BESSE, 1983.

<sup>90</sup> MOTTA, 1988:6.

proposed, (which was strictly followed by the Brazilian Boy Scouts)<sup>91</sup>. Moreover, they believed that since its leaders were linked to the Catholic Church – chiefly to the Catholic Action – these principles could only be accomplished with a stress on religion.<sup>92</sup>

Throughout the world the Girl Guide's Movement is adapted to local conditions, keeping the adherence to Baden Powell's educational principles.<sup>93</sup> Officially the movement was not to have a particular religion, being open to persons of any faith. By contrast, in Brazil the attachment to the Catholic religion was completed in 1947 when the *Federação das Bandeirantes do Brasil* (FBB) stated that it was "A Roman Catholic movement because it was the religion of the majority of Brazilian people."<sup>94</sup>

Since its beginning in Brazil the Guiding Movement was greatly influenced by the Catholic intellectual elite, their daily lives were impregnated with religious references; analogies were made between their practices and religious fact. For instance:

*Jesus Christ was the first Boy Scout. Thus he gives the best example to all Boy Scouts and Girl Guides. His motto, as the ours, was 'To Serve.'*<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Such as Maria Junqueira Schmidt, a celebrated author of books about modern education. In *Bandeirante*, its official magazine, they published reviews of French religious or educational books and comments about Maria Montessori's educational principles which showed an unexpected sophistication and close attention to the formation of their leaders, probably not found among the Boy Scouts, restricted to the mastery of abilities such as knotting, surviving with few resources in the field, cooking without pans and so on.

<sup>92</sup> This was not been an easy or consensus decision since it was accomplished amidst serious conflicts among the leader members MOTTA, 1988 *ibid.*:30. It can be said that the Movement had two turning points in Brazil, one in the 1940s and another in the 1960s, both provoking serious conflicts among their leading members. Both had as its cause the adhesion to what was the vanguard of the Church at the time: the Liturgical Movement in the 1940s, and Economy and Humanism at the turn of the 1960s.

<sup>93</sup> In Brazil, Guiding received the name of *Bandeirantismo* —the movement of the *Bandeirantes*, after the name given to the Brazilian historical pioneers who penetrate into the wild lands in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The choice of the name was explained by its founders: "in the same way that the *Bandeirantes* penetrated the depth of the wild lands to find gold and gems, we modern *Bandeirantes* should be bound in founding gems in the heart of all girls." MOTTA, 1988: 10. The other branches were named *Fadinhas* (literally little fairies after the British Brownies); *Bandeirantes* (the generic name of the movement) were the junior girl Guides. *Cadets* were the seniors who were training to be leaders in the movement. *Guias* (Guides) the seniors who wanted to do social service rather than becoming leaders.

<sup>94</sup> Earlier in 1938, they had already put a cross at the middle of the shamrock in their official emblem to symbolise Catholicism. The shamrock is the international symbol of the Girl Guides, whose three leaves reminds the members of the three items of their Promise: God, the Country (and the Queen/King in monarchist countries) and the Guide's Code. In 1944 they changed the text of the 6th commandment in the Guide's code giving to it a religious accent. *O Bandeirantismo: Finalidade, Método e sua Aplicação no Brasil* quoted by MOTTA, 1988:32.

<sup>95</sup> Revista *Bandeirante* May 1945:121. When the official image of Our Lady of Fátima left Portugal in a world-wide 'peregrination', the magazine *Bandeirantes* put this headline to the notice: 'N.Sra. de Fátima, the Excursionist' in a clear allusion to the Guides. *Bandeirantes* June/July 1953:55. The specific prayer of the leaders synthesises well this point: *Oh my Lord and Commander, Jesus Christ, who, despite my weakness, have made me leader of my sisters, the Guides. Ensure that forever united with my examples, my words light up the path of your Law in their eyes. Teach me how to show your divine clues in the Nature which You created. Grant me the wisdom and prudence to teach as I must, so that I can lead my Company stage by stage to the Great Encampment of Joy and Rest, where You have already pitched our tents beside Yours for the whole of Eternity.*

The motto of the Brazilian Guides was *Semper Parata* (Always Ready), the Latin version of the Boy Scout's '*Sempre Alerta*' (*Be Prepared*).<sup>96</sup> In the Brazilian translation of Baden Powell's Commandment (known as The Guide's Code) it was not simply said that Guides should preserve, or love nature, but that 'The Guide regards God in His creation and protects plants and animals.'<sup>97</sup> At the Promise, that is the ritual of adherence of a girl to the movement, they sang :

*I'm promising on this day to follow the [Guiding] Code. I'm your Girl Guide, my Lord and King'. I will love You, more and more each day. Oh My Lord do protect my promise.*

In other words, they were not only joining a youth movement, but should be also making a religious option for their lives. There were some striking analogies between their religious routine and the routine of the cloisters.<sup>98</sup> Indeed some of these features seem to have been directly copied as the morning greeting<sup>99</sup> the prayers from the '*Completas*.' Either consciously or unconsciously the priests who aided the implementation of the Guide's movement in Brazil had that model in mind – a sexless religious companionship which would help to stress the Catholic ideal of modesty and chastity in young girls.

For the Guides, the living of rituals should not be a mere obligation rather it should be regarded as a moment of full participation and understanding which was to lead the girls to reach religious maturity - only possible to achieve when there was freedom of choice created by knowledge of what one was doing.<sup>100</sup> Therefore, it is in this field that the differences between the Guides' Movement and Convent schools seemed more remarkable. One former *Bandeirantes* interviewed by Maria Ines Motta stated:

*There was a stress on the rituals quite different from what we had in the religious schools where I had always studied. I was very proud of my knowledge, quite different from what my [Catholic] family and my school friends knew about religion. I was very fond of knowing how to dialogue with the priest the prayers of the Mass, to understanding the meaning of the rites, of the clerical vestments, of the prayers, and such like.*

The particularities of the experience of such ceremonies held in a special environment, distinct from that of the church were mean to have a singular effect on those

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<sup>96</sup> It is worth remembering that Latin was the official language of Catholicism – at that time still used in all religious ceremonies. The meaning of the motto also had a religious explanation. It was said that [ among other situations] a Guide should be always ready 'in the Church, before the sacrarium of the Living God. ' MOTTA, 1988.

<sup>97</sup> MOTTA ( 1988:32.) reported that the original text – "The Guide does not hurt animals and prevents others from doing so" – was changed in 1944.

<sup>98</sup> It is worth comparing both the supplications in the Guide's Promise song – "Oh my Lord do protect my Promise "– and the nuns on the day they make their vows – "O God, incline unto my aid [...]Oh Lord make haste to help me." The autobiographical book ' The Nun's history' provides a good account of it. HULME:20

<sup>99</sup> The Latin salutation –*Sursum Corda* ( Lift your hearts) *Habemus ad Dominum* (We already have ours in God).

<sup>100</sup> For the same reasons they were encouraged to attend all the official ceremonies of the Liturgical Year– such as the Holy Week, Lent, Pentecost and Advent, observing the precepts of fasting and abstinence from meat



young girls' imaginations. The contrast between formality and informality which surrounded its practices played a part: On the one hand, their participation in solemn rites in the camp environment with its emphasis on informality and improvisation<sup>101</sup> contrasted with the seriousness of their messages. On the other hand, the formality of strict obedience to the norms and doctrines of the Church, and the perfect learning of the rites and sacraments – the prayers (usually in Latin), and their symbolism. A kind of knowledge far removed from what was common among Catholics in general at the time.

It is important to recall the growing influence of the Liturgical Movement on Guiding, not only in its religious elements but also in its aesthetic aspects.<sup>102</sup> Likewise this elite, Guides' directors had maintained its attachment to France, and books were read in the original, long before they were translated into Portuguese. Directly or indirectly French authors build up the ethos of the Brazilian Girl Guides - distinct both from the British original, and especially from the Brazilian Boy Scout's Movement. They specially favoured the poems of Lézard, the pseudonym of a Swiss-French Guide,<sup>103</sup> whose poems stressed the sense of sacredness, of beauty, and mystery that should arise from Guiding life. Lézard encouraged humility and simplicity, a sense of duty, religion and patriotism, which did not need great gestures, but could be accomplished in the smallest tasks of one's daily life.

Her message and that of other Guides' favourite authors<sup>104</sup> can be summarised thus: Firstly that religiosity and patriotism should suffuse daily life. Secondly, that candour and simplicity whose perfect model should be childhood, are to be emphasised. It was epitomised in the frequently read and quoted *Le Petit Prince*, written and illustrated as if it was only a child's book.<sup>105</sup> This should not be confused with infantilism – the incapacity to achieve maturity – and represented the complete living of religion, citizenship, wifeness and motherhood. This apparent paradox between achieving perfect maturity and keeping a child's qualities constituted spiritual childhood, a religious perfection which represented the highest form of confidence and attachment to God, only achieved by saints such as Thereza de Lisieux. Thirdly, there was an stress on developing one's sensitivity so that one would be

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<sup>101</sup> For instance improvised and quite amusing costumes worn in the dramas with religious plots.

<sup>102</sup> The chapel on the Guides' headquarters in Rio is a good example of such influence in Brazilian religious architecture.

<sup>103</sup> Her poems were read long before her books were published in Brazil (at the turn of the 1960s). Some of her poems had already been published in the magazine *Bandeirantes*.

<sup>104</sup> Such as Michel Quoist – a priest who wrote *Poemas para Rezar* (Poems for praying); Saint Exupéry, Guy de Laigaudie, Leuret.

<sup>105</sup> Antoine de Saint-Exupéry. Translated into Portuguese by D. Marcos Barbosa, the same Benedictine monk who had written prayers for the Brazilian Guides. So popular did it become among young ladies, and so much mentioned as 'one's favourite book' in beauty contests and debutante's balls that it is ironically labelled 'the book of Beauty Contest candidates', and seldom seriously mentioned today.

able to find beauty and to discover the real [ or hidden] meaning even in ordinary things.<sup>106</sup> Those points meant the ultimate attachment to Christ's message, who favoured children, ordinary people and simplicity. These fundamental principles helped to build the Brazilian Girl Guide ethos encapsulated in the key words authenticity, simplicity, religiosity and patriotism. This poem by Lézard favoured by the Guides epitomise such ideal:

*Be Truthful*  
*Clear like the water of a lake on a sunny day*

*Be Strong*  
*Strong as the rock that no one can break*

*Be Firm*  
*Firm as the oak tree in the fields*

*And Simple*  
*Simple as the skylark that only knows the song it joyfully lifts to the sky.<sup>107</sup>*

That ordinariness and simplicity was to be translated into their daily lives – the path to righteousness is the perfect accomplishment of one's daily duty. These principles which they embodied suited very well the ideology about the role of woman educated to stay in the second line – *the great woman behind a great man*.

### *The Youth Branches of the Catholic Action*

To young people, Catholic Action represented a new way of leading a Catholic life. This involved stressing the positive aspects rather than sin and guilt. Instead of the world as a huge panopticon, with God's angry vigilant eye looking out for human's sins,<sup>108</sup> they preached the search for an intimate loving and adult relationship with him: God should be associated with love rather than punishment. Great importance was given to the moment one 'had met Christ for the first time,' awakening to what was regarded as a mature religion of voluntary commitment. To bring Christ into daily life meant a close intimacy revealed by the way they spoke about him: *O Cristo* ( literary The Christ, in this case, the article suggest closeness and intimacy, in Portuguese).

However this also made the Catholic doctrine about sexuality a special problem for the JUC and JEC.<sup>109</sup> There was a consensus that it should be accepted in a more positive way – as a matter of free acceptance rather than as a directory of prohibitions and sins.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> However, in spite of ideological identity, she was not particularly venerated among the Girl Guides, whose patron was Joan of Arc, paradoxically a woman who reached sanctity, or became famous, through martyrdom and the accomplishment of great acts.

<sup>107</sup> Lézard, 1959 *Bandeirantes*, 2:31.

<sup>108</sup> On the corridor walls of Catholic convents and colleges, they used to paint the phrase – *God sees me*.

<sup>109</sup> JUC was the branch of the Catholic Action formed by students from Universities whilst JEC was the one formed by students from high schools. See chapter 1 of this thesis.

For young people the stress still lay on chastity – not asked only of girls but also of men. Chastity should be regarded as a positive option, not as a lack, but as a victory. This meant the achievement of dominion over the body.<sup>111</sup> Since one had voluntarily opted for the Christian doctrine, there was no sense in moralism: their motto was chastity without Pharisaism, that is, without hypocrisy and formalism. JUC/JEC members should strengthen their will power by habitual attendance at Communion – preceded by the confession – and the fundamental support of their peer group. Moreover, instead of considering God as an accountant's ledger keeping 'columns of debt and credit,' and faithful worried about 'do's' and 'don'ts;' they should regard *the Christ* as friend whose love was worthy any sacrifice.

Since the individual aim should be the total gift of oneself to God and others, selfishness was the major sin. The faithful should remain 'opened to God and others' which was called '*abertura*' (opening). A Catholic couple, or even the group, could not be closed in themselves for this would mean the contrary of a social and religious engagement.

Opening can be regarded in a positive way: a '*peessoa aberta*' ( an open-minded person) is not bound by tradition, is at ease in accepting or understanding what is new, and is not constrained by social prejudices.<sup>112</sup> However, if one says that a woman is opening herself, (*vive se abrindo*) it means her behaviour is immodest – a serious insult. She must be reserved, that is 'closed', transferring the closeness of the domestic domain to her behaviour.

Traditional priests would interpret differently the question of being open or closed in oneself, for this opposition usually had another connotation.<sup>113</sup> They would fundamentally misconstrue the vocabulary used by the militant girls of Catholic Action, interpreting inversely their scruples of not being sufficiently open to others, or being too closed within oneself. This could pose problems for the members when confessing to other priests, less used to their jargon and problems.

In regard to woman, a small detail appears emblematic of the difference between Catholic Action and the other movements. Traditionally to receive the Holy Communion, single women used white tulle veils, which symbolised their virginity, reserving the black ones for married women. At the turn of the decade, members of JUC and JEC started to favour the black veil, emptying its symbolic value: black veils gave them a morally ambiguous image, added to the label of rebel or Communists, and underlined their contrast to members of the traditional associations, such as 'The Daughters of Mary.' This attitude

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<sup>110</sup> This issue will be discussed later in this thesis, see chapter 4 of this thesis.

<sup>111</sup> An analogy can be made to Cassian's precepts, as analysed by Foucault, 1985.

<sup>112</sup> The contrary is a '*peessoa fechada*' (closed person), that is someone who does not speak much and seldom laughs, either out of shyness or bad humour, or as a sign of caution or discretion

<sup>113</sup> HIRSCHON (1978) analyses this dichotomy as a gender opposition in Greek society.

was also a statement of the way they regarded moral issues: as an individual matter only concerning the person and God – without being stated by symbols, or constrained by formal conventions. Alternatively, black veils were also a statement about their adulthood: not the social one conferred by marriage, but the religious maturity achieved by an adult option and engagement 'in favour of Christ'.

As these student branches increased an intense political commitment, the importance of moral sins was supplanted by the idea of 'social sins' in which the real evil was found. The usual recommendations about sexuality began to be regarded as old-fashioned and ridiculous. What importance could a fault against modesty have, regarding an unjust social order, and the exploitation of man's work? <sup>114</sup> Thus their problems of conscience had to be of a different order.

The creation of Catholic Action had had a great appeal for the woman of traditional families chiefly in the major urban centres, since it opened to them a space for becoming modern without leaving their religious values. It was just a matter of putting them under a new vision. However, is worth inserting a critical point through the comments made by the writer Rachel Jardim who described her mixed feelings about woman's militancy in Catholic Action:

*In uncle Mario's family women took an active part in its foundation and, later, in its direction. When it started to work, my enthusiasm for the Church was at its peak. I used to think that I couldn't stay on the sidelines. I had to participate, to act, and that is why I decided to get involved.*

*My debut was in a house on Rua São João. There was great excitement in the air. I suppose that it was probably a very special date. All the women were dressed in white with long sleeves and berets. They looked as if they had just arrived from a procession or a political meeting. They shouted : Hurrah for Christ ! and others answered : the King ! Suddenly I realised that I was also yelling.*

*When I arrived home, I thought about that crowd of shouting women and became afraid. Never again was I to go to the meetings.*

*But Uncle Mario always said that it was an admirable movement, with its JUCs and JECs. All of them determined to make the Church more active, running it in every domain of life. I wanted to be part of it, but when I remembered the white berets, the crowd of shouting women, I lost my courage.<sup>115</sup>*

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<sup>114</sup> However, as BOTAS (1981) pointed out, the Catholic militancy formed at that time kept for life the idea that sex was a minor and less important issue than politic and economical issues, in spite of all posterior social changes regarding sexuality.

<sup>115</sup> JARDIM, 1973:54.

## *Other Laic Movements of the Catholic Church*

The analysis of woman in the lay movements of the Church highlights the problems posed by the Catholic ideology of sexuality for those followers who wanted to live a quotidian existence with the strict attention to Religious rules. They could be either the rigid observance of purity in traditional movements for woman, such as in The Pious Daughters of Mary; a more adult approach to the issue, in the Youth branches of the Catholic Action to the ambiguities related to the question of birth control for the followers of the Associations for Married People.

Traditional laic movements still regarded religion as a matter of private piety, only concerned with moral and charity. Among the most popular for young woman was the '*Pia União das Filhas de Maria*'<sup>116</sup> (Pious Union of the Daughters of Mary), which stressed modesty and chastity, symbolised by their white prudish uniforms – long shirts and long-sleeved blouses, and white tulle veils on their head. The symbol of their dedication was the light blue ribbon with the medal of the Virgin Mary round their neck.<sup>117</sup>

However, sexuality would be posed in much more complex terms for the followers of the movements classified as 'Internalised Catholicism' in Cândido Procópio Camargo's terms.<sup>118</sup> They had the aim of promoting a revival of the religious conscience in order "to increase the perception of some modern values which are to be understood and lived in accordance with the Christian message."<sup>119</sup>

### *The Associations for Married Couples.*

These associations, such as the *Movimento Familiar Cristão* (Christian Family Movement) or the *Equipes de Nazareth* (The teams of Nazareth), resulted from "the need to deepen the religious, matrimonial and family life of the couple and the need for a movement, or a form of spirituality for both spouses. It should be different from other

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<sup>116</sup> I could not discover anything about this movement during my field work in Brazil: the history of the movement (when, where it was created) or its rules. I think it has already disappeared, though it was a very popular movement in the 1950s.

<sup>117</sup> Blue everywhere has a special meaning in this cult: *The blue ribbons – blue is the colour of the Virgin, 'the sapphire', as Dante wrote, which turns all of heaven blue – signified that the wearer was a child of Mary and had dedicated herself to the Virgin and promised to emulate her in thought, word and deed: her chastity, her humility, her gentleness. She was the culmination of womanhood.* WARNER, 1985: xx.

<sup>118</sup> By opposition to the 'Traditional Urban Catholicism, where ' there is a relative frequency to the Sacraments, However, it has a low capacity in changing patterns of behaviour of the faithful persons. CAMARGO,1973:61. For this classification see footnote 55 in chapter 1 of this thesis.

<sup>119</sup> This internalisation endowed the historical experience of the Church with a new significance for the faithful. It was dependent of concrete situations, social class, cultural peculiarities, and the Idiosyncratic personal history. CAMARGO,1973: 81.

movements which appealed either to the husband or to the wife.”<sup>120</sup> These movements were designed to foster the 'internalisation' of the doctrine, and family modernisation.<sup>121</sup>

The transformation of Brazilian society wrought by the rapid development of urban life, expansion of educational opportunities, alterations in the labour market, deep changes in relation to woman's role, and the acceptance of more autonomy for the youth, transformed the traditional patterns of family organisation.<sup>122</sup> The Catholic Church had always unconditionally promoted traditional values, which prescribed asymmetrical roles between sexes and generations. However, the introduction of movements for couples<sup>123</sup> allowed the Church to take control over the process, maintaining its doctrine as the guideline for family modernisation.

These movements proposed changes in family roles ascribing to the father “just a moderate authority over the family.” but maintaining a new version of the role of the ‘*Angel of the Hearth*’ for women: who should keep an environment at home so to provide a better approximation and understanding between parents and children.<sup>124</sup> They reinforced the traditional character of 'the Catholic family' whilst becoming a channel for modernisation: stressing the importance of woman's role in the family and emphasising the need for a joint responsibility for decisions. It meant regarding the couple as having equality in rights and duties: man should not be considered the 'supreme' head of the family anymore. However, there was strong disapproval of paid work outside the home for a wife or mother, fearing that the money would give woman independence', among the other evils it could bring to the family.

In the same way, these associations campaigned for sexual education (only at home) for children as a way to give a 'positive' education for chastity. In fact the propositions of these associations preserved the sexual double moral standards of world society. Whilst virginity was mandatory for girls up to the wedding day, they were not so emphatic in relation to male chastity, in spite of the official doctrine of the Church. Actually “they feared the problems that chastity would bring to a young man's virility.”<sup>125</sup>

For Camargo there was a positive side to the importance given by these associations to the study of Biblical and Papal documents. Based in these documents they

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<sup>120</sup> *Depoimento da Ação Católica Brasileira. Semana Nacional da Ação Católica, 1957.*

<sup>121</sup> CAMARGO,1973:94.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> There were two of these movements in the 1950: *Movimento Familiar Cristão* ( Christian Family Movement) and *Equipe de Nazareth* (Nazareth Team).

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>125</sup> CAMARGO,1973:95.

stressed the “dignity of all human beings” and the “ethical importance of love.”<sup>126</sup> At the same time they used modern techniques of communication for the meetings of the groups. Therefore, their members could internalise new conceptions, simultaneously Christian and modern, about conjugal problems, and child education. Those conceptions, either religious or for family orientation, were functional for an urban life-style, confirming and reinforcing their appropriateness.

There was also an aspect of social gatherings involved in those movements. They used to meet, each time, at the home of one of the couples. It was regarded as a good opportunity for a small party, an attraction which cannot be dismissed. One ex-member commented

*Of course there were those who took religion seriously. But several of us (like me) only joined it for the periodical opportunity for a social gathering. Some of the members were very good cooks, and everyone tried to surpass the others in presenting something different, new and tasty each time.*<sup>127</sup>

This aspect did not pass unnoticed by outsiders. In the town where this lady lived, gossip circulated that the movement was just another form of a elite social gathering. However, the distinction between those who took things seriously and the others was also perceived by the outcasts.

## *Birth Control*

The great issue in discussions about sexuality in the 1950s was birth control.<sup>128</sup> Kahn thoroughly examined the issue, either discussing its benefits for the family and the country,<sup>129</sup> and presenting the advantages, and otherwise, of the available means. This is the point of total disagreement between the religious authors and Kahn.

To understand the position of the Church it is worth looking at the Catholic doctrine of matrimony. The religious debate about birth control came from the discussion about the

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.:95.

<sup>127</sup> Personal testimony given by one of the members from the movement in Juiz de Fora,1991.

<sup>128</sup> For divorce, the other key point of Catholic doctrine about marriage, see chapter 3.

<sup>129</sup> For the author there are eight advantages: a) Sparing human forces ( since a great number of children will inevitably die - for him 3/4 of them - with birth control the family will achieve the same final number of children, sparing the economic expense of rearing and the pain of losing them); b) saving National Wealth; c) saving individual suffering (it is better not to be born than to die from cholera or measles in childhood); d) lessening social sufferings ( increasing the life conditions of the population); e) increasing the individual's living standard; f) consolidating social order ( the excess of poor people put the social stability at risk); g) guarantee of peace; h) suppression of racial decadence ( the individuals of higher social value have less children than the ' inferior' types). KAHN, 1947:114 - 115.

place of 'love between the spouses' in the so called ends of matrimony. In 1927<sup>130</sup> Pope had made a distinction between its primary (procreation and education of children) and secondary ends – 'mutual support and relief of concupiscence.' However, the encyclical letter '*Casti Connubii* (1930), considered a turning point in this doctrine, again stressed procreation as the greatest end of marriage – an official reaction against the increasing movement of birth control.<sup>131</sup> However the encyclical left gaps in its apparent monolithic viewpoint, making possible other interpretations. The Personalist theologians claimed that:<sup>132</sup>

*'In itself, and before all other considerations, the sex act is a complete union of two persons; after this, it tends to bring about the conception of new life if all circumstances are favourable.'*

Thus, in their understanding, in no way procreation could be considered as a primary end. To these objections the Church has answered that their teaching is not merely a matter of biology, but of ethics.<sup>133</sup>

It is important to remember that the considered more advanced sectors of the Church in Brazil were very much influenced by Personalism. In some places these priests were the spiritual directors of modern laic movements.

Later, in 1951, Pope Pious XII preferred to soothe the official position of the Church in the allocution<sup>134</sup> '*Address to Obstetricians*'. Then, the Ogino Knauss Method had been spread even among the Catholics, although the Church formally prohibited any form of birth control. There also had been an increase of neo-Malthusianism alarm after the war.<sup>135</sup> It was in this context that the Pope admitted the right of the Catholic couple to choose the number of children they wanted to have. The choice of an allocution to express his idea is part of the

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<sup>130</sup> Up to them the Church had preached procreation to be the end of this sacrament. Recently Pope John Paul II reaffirmed procreation as the primary end of marriage.

<sup>131</sup> In 1927, a world conference about population issues was held in Geneva; in 1930 an international clinic for contraceptive methods was founded. But most importantly, in 1930 the Anglican Church authorised, with reservations, birth control for the couples that in their conscience felt compelled to carry it out. Therefore, the Anglican Church was the first Christian Church to effect a shift away from the Augustinian doctrine. RIBEIRO, 1986 and 1988

<sup>132</sup> See chapter 1.

<sup>133</sup> The Personalist viewpoint came from the interpretation given to Pius XI's statement in the '*Casti Connubii*': "In this mutual inner formation of the spouses, and in the assiduous application to the job of religious improvement, one can see in all its truth, the primary cause and end of the matrimony." According to Genevois, the Pope very much regretted this statement for the abuse it provoked. Nevertheless, it opened the discussion and further interpretations about the matter. *New Catholic Encyclopaedia* - entry 'Marriage': 267- 270; GENEVOIS, 1959:122.

<sup>134</sup> The Allocution (address) is an oral and generic papal manifestation directed to the public in general - both to Catholics or no-Catholics. It is the least important form of papal document unless it is afterwards transformed into a discourse, to be circulated among the faithfuls. (RIBEIRO, *Ibid.*). The examples in the 1940s are: *Address to Married Couples* - 1941; *Address to Newly-weds* - 1944; *Address to Women of Catholic Action* - 1945.

<sup>135</sup> RIBEIRO, *Ibid.*:15.



ambiguities which characterises the action of the Church in controversial matters — being progressive in some points whilst reinforcing old preaching in others.<sup>136</sup>

In this way 'the natural method' of birth control could be overcome, with reservations. A new expression, 'responsible paternity', was forged to describe what the Church held to be the correct direction for Catholic couples. This expression represented for Catholic couples the safeguard for birth control, although "periodical abstinence." still remains as the only permitted contraceptive method.

Further research would be required to establish the class issues involved in this matter. However, it is possible to assume that the middle classes had strong views about having large families or not. It was middle-class common sense that larger families were characteristic of the lower classes,<sup>138</sup> which was regarded as a proof of their lack of reason or lack of education, aggravated by their blind attachment to [traditional] Catholic religion. In middle-class evaluation, large lower-class families could also be a proof of lack of morality and inability to restrain the instincts.<sup>139</sup> On the other extreme there were the upper classes who could afford big families if they wanted. So, birth control was in fact predominantly a middle-class matter.

The middle classes received the pressures of modern life-style more acutely, the appeals of consumerism, the domestic appliances which more than being devices to smooth domestic housework, were powerful signs of status. It became clear that to partake in the wonders of modern life, the middle classes had to reformulate their way of living. In order to live in the more fashionable areas, they had to accept the spatial limitations of the flats, for the acquisition of new signs of status or the modern home of the glossy magazines, require more liquidity; to boast that all the children were having good educational opportunities, their number had to be limited.

For the Church<sup>140</sup> birth control was represented as an excessive attachment to worldly values, and selfishness: it was egotistical to prevent more souls from reaching the glory of heaven. Having a large family was far from irresponsible, since the alleged

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<sup>136</sup> In this way they can please the conservative wing while considering the claims for reforms. Had the Pope issued another encyclical, it would probably have been regarded as a complete revision in Church positions.

<sup>138</sup> A discussion of the reason for this exceeds the scope of this thesis.

<sup>139</sup> They still echoed Victorian prejudices' about this issue. See, for instance, OGDEN, 1987. Fritz Kahn totally agreed with this opinion: "Unintelligent and amoral individuals do not hesitate in giving birth to their offspring- 'How will I feed them?' 'Well, the State must provide their subsistence; ' My children have no need of education - since I have never studied and nevertheless survived. "This author identified these "unintelligent and amoral individuals" with the ones who had " inferior jobs, or the non-literate workers," that is - every individual who had not had "a school education and professional training.' KAHN, 1947:115.

<sup>140</sup> These opinions were shared, without exception, by all the authors of religious manuals examined.

economic difficulties came from the attachment to false needs brought by modern society<sup>141</sup> ( as the idea of good education for all the children— just the most cherished goal in middle-class projects for upward mobility).<sup>142</sup> In general, middle-class arguments were considered a lack of confidence in Divine Providence and disbelief in the word of the Gospel (“behold the lilies in the field...”).

Stronger condemnation was reserved for the possible personal reluctance of women to have a large number of children, either for health reasons or for fear of damage to physical appearance.<sup>143</sup> Against this, Geraldo de Sousa argued that “pleasure is always a loan with high interests.”<sup>144</sup> This, notwithstanding, said the author, nature gave to woman many advantages to compensate pregnancy, so that “a woman only reaches the zenith of her life after the birth of the third children. “For him,

*[T]he surgeries for nervous diseases are filled with women who have less than three children, and more, feminine nervous diseases, and a great number of other female affections are cured just with pregnancy. Moreover, there is a close relation between feminine longevity and the number of children.*<sup>145</sup>

The author regrets that no one speaks about the serious problems brought about by sterility. It is curious how these authors rooted their religious arguments in biology: they maintain that far from being arbitrary, Church precepts express the laws of nature. Following this argument, only periodical continence could be admitted as contraceptive, although one could argue about how ‘natural’ such abstinence is. Father Desmarais compares the Ogino Knauss method to morphine and cocaine — extreme medicine for an extreme malady.<sup>146</sup>

Birth control was really the main problem for the middle-class married woman in her religious life, to the extent that the regular attendance at the sacraments was almost represented as a prerogative of single women: one had to confess in order to receive Holy Communion. However, priests did not absolve those who used contraceptive devices. Even the Ogino Knauss method required the special permission of the priest, who evaluated

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<sup>141</sup> It is important to stress the widespread perception about vitamins and the need of a ‘scientific’ nutrition for the right upbringing of children.

<sup>142</sup> A very common affirmation is that “a degree is the only (or best) heritage I can leave for my children.” It was regarded as the ultimate parent’s duty. “In spite of everything she was able to make all her children graduate” (*formou todos os filhos*). This is regarded as the most visible proof of the sacrifices, or hard labour a mother achieved in the overcoming of any adversity, such as impoverishment or early widowhood.

<sup>143</sup> It is important to remind readers of the new pressures on women brought about by the ‘erotization’ of marriage, through the mass media.

<sup>144</sup> SOUSA, 1958:153.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*:154

<sup>146</sup> .It was abstinence, but not at random since the couple could have a control over it. DESMARAIS, 1955 :135.

whether the reasons presented were justifiable or not.<sup>147</sup> For many middle-class couples it was almost impossible to reach a point of agreement with the Church, and the consequence was their abandonment of the sacraments.

However, the Church admitted that often the deliberation over birth control was an imposition of one partner on the other. The question was – could the Church impose a penalty on the innocent party? According to Álvaro Negromonte<sup>148</sup> “it is not a sinner, who did not want to sin.” However, there are two different situations – the first is “when the act started normally but ended in a sinful form,” [coitus interruptus], the other situation was when the act already started in a vicious way, with the use of contraceptive devices. In the first situation, the wife was not considered guilty in spite of her “material co-operation,” provided there were:

*well demonstrated fear of quarrels and misunderstandings; risk of commotion on domestic life; prevention of the use of worse contraceptive devices, fear of adultery, and personal problems in restraining one's use of matrimony.*<sup>149</sup>

But the author warns that “the innocent spouse has the moral duty of cautiously and prudently (never with intolerance and impertinence) counselling him to avoid sinning again.”

A different situation was the agreement to an act started in a vicious manner, an accordance and full participation in sin. In this case “a wife should resist and act as if her husband were any other rapist.” Even then, Negromonte concedes, there are some critical reasons which make the wife obliged to ‘co-operate’ in the sinful act: probability of adultery; confirmed fear of physical abuse; death threats, the shameful breaking of marriage and, “other similar reasons”. The papal encyclical, *Casti Connubii* acknowledged situations when:

*One spouse prefers to sin rather than being the cause for sin; when, for grave reasons, one tolerates the violation of the divine order, without agreeing to it, that is, without being guilty – provide that, for charitable precept, one continuously try to persuade the other to avoid that sin.*<sup>150</sup>

This idea of the innocent spouse was the shift found in Catholic doctrine, for many women accommodated the need of birth control and the frequency to the Sacraments. Since it was conventionally hold that religion was a feminine issue, and the exigencies of sex, a masculine prerogative, the innocent wife was an easily accepted figure.

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<sup>147</sup> An advertisement introduced “Indicator, a Swiss appliance to automatically calculate woman's fertile days, each day, without errors.” Under the headline “Babies, only at appointed dates. Pregnancy, just when You wish” it explained: “if you want to postpone pregnancy, for reasons of health, money...etc.etc.etc Do it by the only one safe, scientific and Church approved method.” *O Cruzeiro* 31 (22):42; 14 /3/1959.

<sup>148</sup> NEGROMONTE, 1961:121 - 125.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*:122.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*:123.

Nevertheless, the small number of married couples attending the sacraments was a favourite theme of the religious manuals, and every form of argument was used to compel them to change this situation. Children at Catholic schools were pressed to cajole their parents into taking Communion with them. The refusal of parents was justified by the need to confess and the consequent dilemma in relation to birth control.

Members of the religious associations for couples lived such dilemma in a different way. These movements stressed so-called responsible paternity, thereby admitting that the couple should determine the number of children they could rise appropriately. From the close acquaintance between the couples and the priest – their spiritual director – more tolerance would be found for possible transgressions.<sup>151</sup>

The sacrament of Confession, instead of being a kind of private tribunal for accusations, was regarded as the opportunity for never-ending divine forgiveness, thus, not the possible repetition of the fault mattered, but the desire, albeit only in that moment, to try to avoid the sin again. If it guaranteed the frequent attendance to the sacraments it also helped to develop a profound sense of guilt among the women of such associations. They lived out in their daily life the contradictions of a promise which they knew from the outset would be difficult to fulfil. Therefore, even 'administering' in their favour the Catholic precepts, usually these couples had larger families than was usual among the middle classes at that time.

### *The Religious Aesthetic as a Diacritical Sign*

The religious aesthetic – a point less frequently analysed– is emblematic of the 'schism' between the traditional movements and the intellectual one, under the influence of the European New Liturgy Movement.<sup>152</sup> This discussion here aims to draw attention to class issues embedded in those tendencies.

People in general favoured either the rich baroque style of colonial times, or a stylised Gothic architecture, with an array of polychromatic images of saints made in plaster of Paris, dated from the turn of the century. These Churches displayed the devotion of the people for their saints in embroidered towels, and in the profusion of candles and flowers arrangements.

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<sup>151</sup> Until today the Catholic Church has officially thoroughly opposed any form of contraception - except periodical abstinence. However, it has been reported that privately priests give their consent for the use of the pill and mechanical devices, in spite of its official condemnation.

<sup>152</sup> This movement had been very important in Europe, when many churches and chapels had to be built or rebuilt after the Second World War. Members of this movement looked for aesthetic forms which could represent people's spirituality in the new times.

By contrast intellectual groups preferred the new European style with its simplification of forms and clear lines. So their modern chapels had only the altar, a crucifix, stained glass and objects considered strictly necessary.<sup>153</sup>

Jean Baudrillard<sup>154</sup> comments that churches usually are more luxurious in the richer quarters, However, “class imperatives could also impose a kind of ascetic religiosity” as in Protestant religions. According to this author, in Protestantism it is the lack of ostentation which better displays the glory of God. This also holds for the Liturgical Movement, a good example of what Baudrillard calls ‘austere ostentation.’ Moreover, the ‘schism’ between modern and traditional forms of Catholicism was epitomised in the religious aesthetic.

The Liturgical Movement abandoned the cult of saints, so dear to the popular religion, preferring to pray directly to God, using the mediation of the Virgin Mary. Instead of the polychromatic images, with iconographic symbols which made people distinguish one devotion to Mary from the other, they favoured ‘the liturgical’ plain white images of the Virgin and Crucifix, which were quite elongated,<sup>155</sup> incorporating the association of verticality with spirituality. These images were popularly considered disproportional and thus, identified with modern art. The same can be said about the holy pictures children used to give friends and relatives as a memento of their First Communion. Instead of the polychromatic figures with sentimental rhymes on the reverse, they favoured modern figures in wood engravings, with a verse of the Bible. The traditional religious songs were substituted by the singing of Psalms translated from French – “it was a kind of recitation whose melody was based in the Greek mode, very far from the characteristics of popular Brazilian music, and sounded strange to the people.”<sup>156</sup>

People in general looked with suspicion on modern art, and it was represented as unintelligible, ugly and arrogant. As Bourdieu pointed out “a work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possess the cultural competence, that is the code into which it is encoded.”<sup>157</sup> This cultural competence belonged to the intellectual elite.

Therefore the class issue cannot be ignored. It was an attempt to impose the taste of the more intellectual group of the elite which contributed in turn to an increase in the conflicts and suspicions between the two groups. Writer Rachel Jardim described this situation in Juiz de Fora:

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<sup>153</sup> A good example is the chapel in the FBB (Federação das Bandeirantes do Brasil – Brazilian Girl Guides Federation) headquarters.

<sup>154</sup> BAUDRILLARD, 1981:77.

<sup>155</sup> In these images, the Greek canon of 7 1/2 heads proportion was abandoned.

<sup>156</sup> SANCHIS, 1985:66.

<sup>157</sup> BOURDIEU, 1984: 2.

*The dominant intellectual group – if there was one — was Catholic: A Catholicism of elite 'à la mode Maritain.' One of the leaders lived in a beautiful mansion. Boys and girls went to its swimming pool on alternate days. It reminded me of bathing in a full length gown at the nun's boarding school. I knew those people very well. They were sheltered in their moralism as a justification for their horror, their almost physical repulsion towards contact with people from other classes. Oh, yes, everybody there spoke in low voice, had refinement and the best manners at the table. They didn't know vulgarity. But they were really worried about poverty. Their charity delighted them. Moralism was their shield; their etiquette book made them untouchable and gave justification for that remoteness.<sup>158</sup>*

Rachel Jardim synthesises quite well how this Catholic elite used their intellectual and artistic expertise as a distinctive sign to reinforce class boundaries. Quite often, these 'good families' represented not only the religious elite as the political and economical ruling class.

## *The Church And Higher Education For Woman*

In spite of all the official criticism against women in higher education, the Brazilian church in its attempts to regain its political power and influence over the Elite, create the coeducational Catholic University in 1941 (later elevated to PUC).<sup>159</sup> They had in mind the study of the humanities as opposed to the official universities dedicated to more technical courses. This began to be favoured by middle- to upper-class girls looking for a higher education. A course in Humanities prepared teachers for secondary schools but it also provided intellectual accomplishment for girls already engaged to be married in a morally secure environment, according to Catholic precepts, and the aims of such education were social rather than Academic. In the 1950s, they created Journalism, very much favoured by girls looking for modern intellectual accomplishment: they learnt a bit of Political Economy, Sociology, Criminology, Geography, History. Still it was meant to provide a finishing of general culture rather than a profession for those girls.<sup>160</sup>

The creation of the PUC adduces evidence that the condemnation of higher education for women was class-selective: it was not directed against the elite girls whose wifely' duties would need more social accomplishments in maintaining the family's status in

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<sup>158</sup> JARDIM, 1973: 78-79.

<sup>159</sup> About the change of the Catholic University to Pontifical Catholic University ( Pontifícia Universidade Católica. PUC) see chapter 1. The University started with courses in Law, Philosophy, Classical Studies, Neo Latin Languages, Anglo Germanic Languages, Geography, History, Education and Social Sciences. SALÉM, 1979.

<sup>160</sup> In 1969 this course was changed to 'Social Communication Studies,' to give professional ability in journalism, publicity and public relation. The enduring popularity of this course among middle-class young women provided a stereotyped character 'The female student of Communication from the PUC' who is at times ridiculed in newspapers and comical television programs.

society than domestic skills. They would not have to do housework by themselves, and would have time and money to become refined ladies of leisure.<sup>161</sup>

In spite of religious condemnation, in the 1950s the number of women in secondary courses and even in the universities increased significantly, proving that such religious criticism was not efficient at all. The 'Escolas Normal' which prepared women to be teachers in primary schools – an almost exclusively feminine career – remained at the top of the studies for a great number of women. Although women were enrolled in courses represented as 'feminine' or as an extension of mothering, this process was a decisive step towards social modernisation.

In this sense the creation of the first undergraduate course of Home Economics in Brazil is emblematic: first it marks a shift in the French influence introducing an US American one; second, in spite of being regarded as a course for housewives, it represented a view of domesticity through a conception supposed to be scientific, and thus modern (Taylorism applied to housework, the strict use of industrialised food etc).<sup>162</sup>

Female higher education brought other modernising side effects. As only the capital cities had undergraduate courses, women desiring to pursue higher education had to move from their hometown to live and study in larger urban centres, provoking the serious problem of their housing.<sup>163</sup>

There was an enormous resistance among parents to consent to their daughters living alone because of its moral dangers.<sup>164</sup> For making a good marriage, a good reputation

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<sup>161</sup>One author regrets that the things women learn have no applicability at all "in the kitchen or the sewing room, for intimacy with the children or the relationship with the servants D'AZEVEDO, 1948:188.. Other arguments were rooted in the supposed [biological] feminine nature: To train a doctor forgetting the woman means to subvert nature's law which in turn established the differentiation of the sexes marking feminine life with particular rhythms which must constrain woman's work. Plínio Salgado quoted by D'AZEVEDO, 1948:189. (Plínio Salgado was the creator of Integralism - a Brazilian version of fascism.) Authors claimed that they were moved by the desire of warn the public against "this obsession in favour of books, this harmful intellectual feeding bottle which provides only artificial nourishment instead of the healthy and copious feeding from the realities of life. D'AZEVEDO, *Ibid.*:192.

<sup>162</sup> For a detailed analysis of the introduction of the first course of home economics in Brazil, see LOPES, 1995. See also chapter 9 of this thesis.

<sup>163</sup> A newspaper from the University of Paraná student's union stated: "To say that there are no houses for girls it is not the truth. Everyday one can find several advertisements for rooms to rent in the newspapers. Hence there is no lack of places, but they hardly attend the minimum conditions for the social, moral and intellectual life of the students." (A Flâmula, June 5 1954) quoted by MARTINS, 1992:17.

<sup>164</sup> The best solution was to live with a relative or a family's close friend since other options were more problematic: boarding houses were not considered suitable for young women because they did not provide them with 'a family environment'; and there were few '*Pensionatos*,' whose rules used to be as strict as those of convents. Another solution was to share a rented house – popularly called 'a *república*', likewise, not considered suitable for family girls, who would be there all by themselves.

was much more important for their future than a higher degree.<sup>166</sup> Nevertheless, women did leave their parental houses. The creation of the *Casa da Estudante do Paraná* provides a good case study of this issue.<sup>166</sup> There, women students had the freedom to run a house all by themselves, but with self imposed rules almost as severe as those of convents to safeguard their moral reputation.

This issue stresses the particularities of women in higher education at the 1950s. On the one hand, there was a breaking of the traditional pattern of the woman's role, since going to the university was part of a personal project which could lead woman to a professional career.<sup>167</sup> On the other hand, these projects actually reinforced the traditional woman's role since they were regarded as an alternative if their marriage hopes were not fulfilled.

### *The Schools of Social Service*

The influence of the modern tendencies of Catholicism and its social doctrine shaped the philosophy of the Social Service Schools, created in the 1930s. They emerged in the same context and from similar motives to Catholic Action.<sup>168</sup> Although these schools had no official link with the Church<sup>169</sup> they could act as the mouthpiece for Catholic social doctrine, since most students were already militants from Catholic Action :

*We had a conception of man, a conception of the world based on Christian thought. From that vision we studied the Social Doctrine of the Church, and from that point we analysed social institutions such as the State, the Family and the Trade Union.<sup>170</sup>*

Thus, they broke with the traditional Catholic way of dealing with social problems.

<sup>171</sup> Instead of doing philanthropic work, they commended the 'human betterment of poor

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<sup>165</sup> In a interview conducted in 1982, for my Masters dissertation, a young girl bitterly complained about her parents who would never let her live alone in another town to study Psychology - her most cherished dream. Surprisingly, she stated that she would never allow her daughter to study in another town, hence supporting her parent's attitude.

<sup>166</sup> See MARTINS, 1992.

<sup>167</sup> In this sense, as several analyses have pointed out, it must be regarded as a stage in the modernisation of Brazilian society which was changing from a holistic society to an individualist one.

<sup>168</sup> They become part of the same political project of regaining the hegemony the Church had lost at the proclamation of the Republic in 1899: *The way to achieve this would be the building of a consensual society, which would not be identified either with communism or liberalism. They did not put into question the capitalist mode of production, but proposed a humanised society through the collaboration among the classes in conflict*. Editorial to *Serviço Social e Sociedade* 12, 1983.

<sup>169</sup> This informal link is synthesised in the choice of the day of the promulgation of the *Rerum Novarum* as the Social Service day.'

<sup>170</sup> Interview with one of the pioneers of Social Service in Brasil. *Serviço Social e Sociedade*, 12:19.

<sup>171</sup> In the second half of the 1950s, the Schools of Social Service had been deeply influenced by Fr. Lebrete's movement known as Economy and Humanism. He criticised the documents of the Church about social matters as being far removed from reality. He accordingly stimulated research so as to really discover Brazilian social problems. This



people.' They opposed the traditional sectors of the Church by proclaiming their firm attachment to the Gospel, thus implying that others were only led by tradition.<sup>172</sup>

The seeds of Social Service seem to be the early associations of alumni of two of the most exclusive convent schools for upper-class girls: the '*Colégio Sion*' and the '*Colégio Des Oiseaux*'. The later brought a Belgian woman to teach the fundamentals of social service, "to prevent its alumni from spending their time at tea parties and shopping."<sup>173</sup> By 1953, Social Service as a professional field had been consolidated: Some class associations had successfully been created and in the same year the schools of Social Service were officially recognised as university courses.

In spite of its origins in the upper echelons of society, the professionals who graduated in the schools were middle-class women who found in them a way to secure a legitimate profession. As one of the pioneers stated, those women worked not only because they believed they had the right to participate in public life, but because they needed to make a living.

*They found in those schools the opportunity for a profession, where they could find self-realisation and accomplish their social vocation based on Christian values.*<sup>174</sup>

However, Catholics were not unanimous about this matter. Some Catholic people regarded women being paid for work outside the home with suspicion. Women should not compete with men in the labour market. For others the main problem lay in accepting that women could earn a salary. They believed that women should only be dedicated to voluntary philanthropic unpaid work.<sup>175</sup> One of the first women to work in the Social Service donated all the salary she earned since she believed it was not right to be paid to do that kind of work. It is easy to imagine the social echelon she came from. Besides the representations around transforming caring into a profession, a job which a woman was supposed to accomplish as part of her 'nature', embodies an implicit class prejudice. Only women from the upper classes could busy themselves in philanthropy without earning anything. In their critique of women's paid work, commentators seemed to have only their

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research was conducted chiefly in the shanty towns and suburbs of the major cities. Leuret also criticised the vague discourse about 'human dignity' and 'human rights' without effective action to promote them, and considered that in general the Social Services were mere palliatives. Thus he encouraged professionals to reflect about their roles and objectives.

<sup>172</sup> There are two official sources of the Catholic Doctrine – the Bible and Tradition.

<sup>173</sup> Thus the pioneers of social service in Brazil were deeply influenced by the French and Belgian theories of social service. Later they would mix the European (more theoretical) vision about social service with the more practical American one. In their words: "Here, we are thinking about social problems, there (in USA) they are training people to do social work." *Revista Serviço Social e Sociedade*: 48.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*:17.

<sup>175</sup> See chapter 4 of this thesis.

peers in mind. Clearly they were not referring to jobs done by the lower-class women, whose paid work had always been put at the service of the elite. It is even possible that, unconsciously, the elite feared that wages would put them at the same level.

### *Professional Careers*

The analysis of the Social Service Schools also raises the question of women in paid work outside home. As a whole, the idea of woman's economic independence was regarded by the Church as running against her 'divine mission', or as a way of subverting the Pauline precept.

Álvaro Negromonte speaks eagerly about the 'diabolic plan' which aims to remove woman from the honest and trusty submission to the husband as if it were an ignoble slavery.<sup>176</sup> In the name of this 'illusory emancipation' they (the unnamed conspirators) want her to be economically independent. The author seems terrified about the consequences: she will be able to "have her own business and independently administer its particular affairs."<sup>177</sup> Therefore, he says, the "enemies of the family institution" intend to "remove woman from domestic tasks, from childminding and concern for her family." Worse, in the end they will release her from her conjugal duties, as wife and mother. The author warns women that "this would be the total degradation of feminine nature and mother's dignity." Because its results would be to "deprive husband from wife, children from mother and all the family of the one who must be their most faithful guardian."<sup>178</sup> Soares D'Azevedo adds "moreover she will deny the Fatherland not only one more child, but several of them."<sup>179</sup>

Frieda Stadler considers the time spent with apprenticeship as negligence towards woman's 'true vocation'. And the author foresaw in it "the germ of a future disgrace."

*She spends a lot of energy, time and money in order to secure an specialisation. For it she sacrifices her precious youth; the time she could spend in the fresh air; the hours of rest which would strengthen her organism; days of joy and pleasure; months and years which could be spent learning every kind of more useful practical skills for her future.<sup>180</sup> And she still dares to say that she longs to be a wife and mother... Doesn't she realise that her professional skills are accomplished to the detriment of her future husband and children?<sup>181</sup>*

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<sup>176</sup> NEGROMONTE, 1961:151.

<sup>177</sup> It is important to note that up to the 1960s a married woman was legally dependent on the husband in any matter. Juridically she was considered 'minor', compared to children and mad persons. A situation that Álvaro Negromonte seems to be anxious to perpetuate.

<sup>178</sup> Pope Pius XII quoted by NEGROMONTE, 1961:151. See also SOUSA, 1957:74.

<sup>179</sup> D'AZEVEDO, 1948:85

<sup>180</sup> That is domestic tasks since her future, as the one of any girl should be marrying and becoming a good housewife.

<sup>181</sup> STADLER 1956:74

Thus the post-war re-domestication of woman more than a manifestation of men's selfishness or economic need had moral motivations:<sup>182</sup> She regards the rights of the woman and the children as irreconcilable and marriage and career, thus, incompatible.<sup>183</sup>

Besides, she does not consider getting a job worthy of a woman :

*The struggle for life is becoming harder and harder and as woman is the weak part she must be defeated. An extensive number of jobs are in men's hands. Moreover, they are the ones who dictate laws and rules so you can count on the fact that they will keep the best ones to themselves.*

Frieda Stadler endorses the idea that the one who has power has also the right to impose the rules, and it is not even suggested that woman can fight against an unjust condition. She also accepts the reasoning behind lower payment for woman's jobs. So she recommends that her readers answer for themselves this question: "is it worth studying hard, spoiling one's health to get in return a low wage?" And she adds with scorn: " well, if you succeed in getting a job, at all..."<sup>184</sup>

These authors stressed that woman in paid work had much more to lose than to gain: her health will suffer for standing up for several hours, and this will affect " the vital organs which are characteristic of her sex;" she will live in mortal sin because of birth control (a direct consequence of leaving home); and her 'moral health' will suffer from close contact with men:

*[T]heir saucy chatting, the temptations, seductions and the dangerous intimacy. Bit by bit she will lose her daintiness and the characteristic decorum of a 'family girl'. Unconsciously she will regard herself as independent, emancipated, free from old prejudices and old fashioned habits. She exposes her 'modernity', with a shivering lack of shame. However, what she considers freedom is only 'masculinization', an escape from herself.*<sup>185</sup>

D'Azevedo did not accept the argument of economic needs, questioning the extension of that 'necessity,' which he considered mere 'exigencies' of the modern way of life:

*Luxury dresses, silk stockings, fashionable shoes, perfumes, creams, lipstick. Going to the hairdresser, manicure, pedicure. Jewellery, embellishments and attires. Tea in the finest tea-room, cinema, theatre, more balls than one could afford, or even the casino. Visits and the socially imposed gifts, frequent excursions and trips. The car instead of the bus, the telegram for a letter, a three hundred cruzeiros bag, instead of a similar for fifty; fancy dresses for carnival, a new hat for each season and each dress;*

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<sup>182</sup> "It is incontestable that it is made in the best interest of humankind." STADLER, *ibid.*:74.

<sup>183</sup> She concedes that women have the right to be independent, to earn a life, to develop their potentialities. On the other hand, the child has the right to be born, to be fed, educated, have a mother, a home and happiness.

<sup>184</sup> STADLER, *ibid.*:75

<sup>185</sup> D'AZEVEDO, 1948:87

*charity for exhibition, and the teeth...my God, where will one get enough gold for them?*<sup>186</sup>

Sometimes it is economic necessity that moves woman towards a paid job. Following papal preaching, only two jobs were considered suitable for woman : teaching and nursing, regarded as extensions of domestic tasks thus part of her 'divine mission.' Jobs against 'feminine nature' were responsible for "the 'tedium vitae' (sic) which poisons those women's existence; their early wrinkles, white hair, and liver illness which creams, dyes and medicines are helpless to solve."<sup>187</sup> In conclusion traditional authors regretted the possibility of an early ageing of woman who must be "young, gentle and seductive, in order to get a husband."

D'Azevedo's critique conflates gender and class prejudices. He warns about the dangers of 'masculinization' lamenting woman "reduced to spent her days as a bookkeeper in offices; either staying in tills or selling sausages in the market."<sup>188</sup> Or else, he rejected jobs which did not demand specific skills favoured by the lower classes. Moreover, he chose examples where woman is direct or indirectly managing money (a male prerogative). Thus he warns,

*men will regard her as a machine to make money rather than a flower to perfume the world. Instead of being called lady she will be reduced to be a comrade [...] and where woman became 'masculine' men in turn 'effeminate.'*<sup>189</sup>

'Gatinha Angorá' (Angora Pussycat) — the meaningful pseudonym of one of the members of *The Reader's Club* of 'O Jornal'- reproduced the same arguments under the title 'A Strong Sex...or a Fragile One?' She challenges the idea that men are still the stronger sex "since women are showing enough capacity to fill high positions in their job." However, she comments ironically, women are also smoking, drinking and staying out late at night, "as any lad would." Rather than a feminist piece of work as it seemed, it is a harsh critique also directed to men. She asks

*[W]here are the men of yesterday ? the ones proud of their strengthen and dignity ? Haven't you realised that in supporting modern women you are also killing the beautiful things of life: poetry, love, dreams, romanticism, and all the celestial hours which make life worth living ?*

She blames men for the independence and freedom woman was achieving, and attributed to woman's paid work the increasing tendency towards birth control. She envisages woman

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<sup>186</sup> The goal of his reproaches was the whole of modern life style as pictured in national magazines and the needs brought up by publicity which helped to shape the 'new woman. D'AZEVEDO, 1949:82.

<sup>187</sup> D'AZEVEDO, *ibid.*

<sup>188</sup> D'AZEVEDO, *ibid.*

<sup>189</sup> D'AZEVEDO, 1949.:87 and 1948:190

in Le Fort's terms – "Men are guilty for her loss of her sweet mystery, which always had been her charm, and modesty, which was her best shield." She scoffed at men because ' the desire of having two breadwinners' at home is a proof of their lack of masculinity." So it is easy to understand why she choose as her pseudonym a luxury pet which just stays at home, purring when someone ( a man) caresses her.<sup>190</sup>

## *Conclusion*

The Catholic Church, in spite of its misogyny, had always provided women with an alternative and legitimated space other than the domestic domain. Church has traditionally been considered a feminine space, an extension of home, functioning as a space of mediation between the domestic domain and the public sphere.

In the 1940s The Church created the Catholic University very much favoured by women, however religious authors insisted on condemning women on higher education. Statistics also show that, in spite of all moral criticisms, the number of female students started to increase in all levels of schooling in the 1950s.

By participating in any lay associations – modern or traditional – women were empowered to act, to have roles other than that of mother or (house)wife, to participate of a network of friends and a forum for discussion. Moreover, its leadership also gave status and power to woman beyond the reach of the Church, mainly in small towns.<sup>191</sup> Likewise, the associations which emphasised militancy and action helped women to build positive self-images, which could be important during their process of ageing.<sup>192</sup> Hence, in spite of its misogynist discourse, the Catholic Church could also provide a powerful source for the construction of a more positive pattern of femininity.

However, changes in the living of the Catholic doctrine brought challenges to the followers of the more intellectual movements which sought a quotidian infused by a more mature and conscious commitment. This would pose special problems for both the youth and the couples who had to come to terms with the official view point about sexuality, not quite appropriate to the modern way of living in the 1950s.

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<sup>190</sup> This clipping was given to me by one of the members of the 'Reader's Club' from *O Jornal Feminino*, ( supplement of *O Jornal*). It was on the reverse side of an embroidery pattern without indication of date or page. The same issue is disclosed by Dinah Silveira de Queiroz - a famous writer - in " *Diálogos da Razão*," a regular column in *O Cruzeiro*. She presents arguments pro and against the 'Modern Woman - who has a job and competes with man." The against-arguments blames the modern woman for 'the moral crisis' in society. The pro-argument considers man responsible for the situation, since he has abdicated from his role of breadwinner. For Queiroz, woman is compelled to work only when man does not earn sufficiently to maintain the family. *O Cruzeiro*:28, 2/7/55.

<sup>191</sup> An interesting analysis of the power accumulated by a woman who was in charge of the organisation of religious rituals, Church decoration, and Catholic associations in a Brazilian village was made in REILEY, 1985.

<sup>192</sup> BARROS, 1981.

## Chapter 4

# *'Feminine Nature' And Sexuality*

## *Introduction*

When analysing the sources for woman's imaginary five points must be taken into account. First, the religious model presented to woman came from a male gaze; second, Catholic ideology was periodically brought up to date through the Pope's encyclical and public utterances, as the final word of the Church about problems and issues of contemporary life. From the nineteenth century these constituted the main source of religious didactic literature; third, the acknowledgement, by the Church, that these were 'new times' with new exigencies, values, behaviour patterns encapsulated in the expression 'modern civilisation'; regarded as a threat to Catholic doctrine, and therefore condemned, strongly (and in vain) by all the Popes since Gregory XVI (1831-1846). The questioning of and struggle against modernity pervaded didactic literature for girls to different degrees. Traditionalists preached a rejection of modern life, whilst others, even agreeing that modernity brought dangers aimed to show how a Catholic girl could deal with a modern lifestyle without betraying Catholic ideals. Fourth, the core of Catholic doctrine was chastity, regarded as purity. Sexual purity equalled religious purity. This doctrine also matched the Brazilian cultural ethos in relation to gender roles that could be characterised by its Mediterranean heritage, of 'machismo' and female virginity. These four points were taken for granted in the process of such construction, and underline this analysis of woman's nature and vocation.

## *A Male Gaze and a Male Voice*

Through the Catholic encyclicals, the Church reacted against the movement toward feminine emancipation, resisted the idea of equal education for both sexes, considered scientific or intellectual interests as threatening to 'true woman's vocation' and regarded paid work or a public career as a menace to family stability. This is the implicit message still present in the didactic literature read by girls in the Brazilian 1950s. It is important to note that even when written by women, those books revealed a view point which came from "conceptions and images made by a group of men, who choose celibacy and chastity as a way of life, thus living a quotidian apart from women, refusing their co-existence."<sup>1</sup>

The major issue for the Catholic Church in the 1950s was women's sexuality in relation to her position in marriage, 'the order in domestic life' and the problem of contraception. In 1930, Pius XI proclaimed the official point of view of the church about this matter in the encyclical letter *Casti Connubii*. Religious manuals for girls in the 1940s and 1950s were informed by this encyclical and by the several addresses from Pius XII.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, sooner or later, they had to come to terms with the fact that the old order had gone, and they would have to rule in the new, to keep power and authority.

Differences among authors of religious didactic literature for girls were revealed by their different attitudes regarding the 'modern world'. Traditional authors considered *'the world'* to be a source of evil, to be avoided at any cost, and warned their readers against its dangers.<sup>3</sup> The World meant the release of the senses from the discipline imposed by Religion. Authors Germaine Greer and Maeve Binchy were educated by nuns at opposite ends of the earth (Australia and England), yet both recall leaving school believing — as the Brazilian girls also did "that the world was to be full of lovely pulsating, steaming lust."<sup>4</sup>

Soares D'Azevedo referred to it as 'The Vortex'. In his utterances he reinforced the position of the Catholic Church in Brazil against the presence of the State in issues such as Health, Education and Social Care; and the struggle against 'false doctrines'. For him,

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<sup>1</sup> KLAPISCH-ZUBER, 1990:16.

<sup>2</sup> Such as his *Address to Newlyweds* (1941); *Address to the Women of Catholic Action* (1945); *Address to Obstetricians* (1951).

<sup>3</sup> BAETEMAN, 1958:196. He followed his utterances by warnings against 'the dangers of the world' which are:. He ended the chapter with "Counsels to the young worker girl". Ibid.:203- 226.

<sup>4</sup> BENNET & FORGAN, 1991:2.

*Woman's enemies come out under an array of names: Socialism, Anarchism, Free-thinking, Communism, Fascism, Nazism. The atheists disclose the iniquities of the Church to woman, promising her equality in work conditions and in the joys of life. (I even wonder why these men haven't also claimed their share in labour-pains). Philanthropy instead of Charity. Instruction only provided by the State. Domestic Life? Family bounds...Rubbish! Submission to man? Protection from man? No, just observance to and protection from the State. It means that woman will pass from the condition of man's slave to this of a slave of the State. What these men want is just this a woman-machine, a woman object of pleasure.<sup>5</sup>*

Woman's displacement would follow her economic, social and physiological emancipation. They would free her from the burden of wifehood and motherhood, giving her control over her body, enslaving her to sin.<sup>6</sup>

Traditional didactic authors condemned mundane amusements dancing, sports, romantic novels, theatre and cinema. For them, the modern world was tantamount to the degradation of moral and religious values, where leisure was moved by sin; where the State transformed women into citizens;<sup>7</sup> architects substituted houses with flats;<sup>8</sup> girls from the countryside preferred to work in factories rather than as domestic servants.<sup>9</sup>

Instead of condemning 'the world' in general, or being worried about detail, the 'modernists' questioned how a Christian person should live with these new realities. They cautioning readers against 'pharisaic attitudes' that is finding in everything an 'opportunity for sin'.

Thus, the so-called World could be either mundane, as opposed to religious life; or the State (the secular power expropriating the role and the power of the Church). The Church feared the questioning over the Pauline precept of woman's submission to her husband as part of 'God's plan,'<sup>10</sup> which was the touchstone of Catholic ideology of gender roles. Man and woman are different because they have different missions to be accomplished as part of this plan. Biological and psychological principles arise to prove the difference of 'feminine nature'.

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<sup>5</sup> My underline. D'AZEVEDO, 1949:73. An analogy can be made with the situation in Northern France at the end of the nineteenth century, as analysed by SMITH, 1981, chapter 5.

<sup>6</sup> SOUZA, 1958.

<sup>7</sup> D'AZEVEDO, 1949:73.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.:73.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.:86. See also *Depoimento da Ação Católica Brasileira*. Semana Nacional da Ação Católica, 1957.

<sup>10</sup> This expression and its related statements the divine plan, God's ordinance, divinely ordained, Christ's plan, 'inspired by God' is discussed by DALY, 1968:115- 117



## *'Feminine Nature'*

The idea of 'feminine nature' has slightly changed according to the more or less traditional or modern world view of the religious authors, and both coexisted in the Brazilian 1950s. José Baeteman's ideas about 'man's and woman's nature' seem a mere amplification of common sense: that women were usually more religious and have a better heart than men but could paradoxically be worse than them:<sup>11</sup>

*woman can be cruel. For her, vindictiveness has a particular sweetness; she could kill her victim on pinpricks. She is fierce in slandering and defamation. As a Chinese proverb says: a woman's tongue is her sword. She never lets it become rusty*

The reason for this complexity is her 'natural' weakness in which she is bound by sentiment. The consequences are either greater compassion, kindness and love or ruthlessness, rancour and malevolence on a higher level. This would be evidence that women should live under a firm [and gentle] ruler – fathers, husbands or the Superior in convents ( who are other woman, but directly inspired and assisted by God). Baeteman's examples also expose other stereotypes about Woman, an abstract and universal being disclosing the old dichotomy between Mary and Eve.

However, a vision considered more modern is to be found on the books written by Dominican friars.<sup>12</sup> The Brazilian clergy linked to the Liturgical Movement in Brazil was deeply influenced by the French philosophers whose books were read in the original. Many members of Religious orders also went to France or Belgium to fulfil their theological formation. Back in Brazil they would become the religious directors of the youth branches of Catholic Action, of the Girl Guides, of the Movements for Catholic Couples. They were the teachers of PUC or of Schools of Social Service.

From these authors whose religious and morals ideas pervaded their preaching, is worth analysing at length Gertrude von Le Fort, whose ideas helped to establish the 'modern religious view point about gender roles.'<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> its third edition dates from 1958.

<sup>12</sup> For instance, the books from GENEVOIS, 1959; DESMARAIS. Usually they were translated from French.

<sup>13</sup> Gertrude von Le Fort's book *A Mulher Eterna. A mulher no tempo e fora do tempo* was published in Brazil in 1953. It is reasonable to suggest that her book may have been known -possible through the French translation - much earlier.

## *The Myth of the Eternal Woman*

In 1934, a German woman philosopher Gertrude von Le Fort published *The Eternal Woman*, a semi-theological book which aimed to interpret “the significance of woman, not in the light of her psychological or biological, her historical or social position, but in terms of her symbolic aspect.”<sup>14</sup> She intends to make an a-historical analysis, since her premises derive from the timeless character of womanhood. She stated:

*Motherhood places woman outside Time: making her always and everywhere equal to herself. Motherhood makes indistinguishable the queen and the beggar; it fades the particular marks of nations and differences of cultural level from the more primitive to the highest. Being a mother is not the particular mission of women from a certain time or place. It is simply and timelessly the Woman's mission. Thus, the mother ignores what is particular and unique to each individual. To her any temporal process ends, because time is impotent in the face of the mother. As a virgin the woman is kept in insulation from time; as a wife she shares time with man who exists in time, whilst the mother surpasses time.*<sup>15</sup>

Von Le Fort assumes woman to be a universal category, divorced from social, historical and class conditioning, forgetting that the meanings or representations surrounding female experiences are culturally made, and socially, historically and geographically differently lived. Symbolism must be put into context, hence the so called significance of woman derives precisely from psychological, biological, historical and social facts<sup>16</sup> which the author so much despises.

Von Le Fort's premise is the biological determination of woman's social role which is part of the Creator's plan. From it derives either her subordinate (or secondary) social position and her identification with or greater proximity to nature (contrary to culture).<sup>17</sup> Therefore, what would be later regarded as ‘patriarchal oppression’, was presented as the divine elevation of woman to the role of helpmate in God's creation.

For this author, femininity derives from two sources: ‘the co-operation motif’ and ‘the veil motif.’ Hence the Eternal Woman's vocation for submission and modesty. Actually these

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<sup>14</sup> LE FORT, 1953.xiii,

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.:100.

<sup>16</sup> DALY, 1968:106

<sup>17</sup> This kind of argument have been analysed exhaustively in the 1970s by feminist anthropologists in their investigations about the [apparent] universality of women's subordinate status. See ORTNER, 1974 and also MACCOMARCK & STRATHERN 1980.

are two faces of the same principle that transforms concealment in a woman's privileged form of living and surreptitious acting, in a form of virtue.

The phrase 'Behind a Great Man there is [or should be] a Great Woman' is the crystallisation of von Le Fort's argument.<sup>18</sup> She reinforces stereotypes taking the upper-class lady as her model: a woman's role is reduced in being Man's collaborator; she must disappear in her husband's work and only be perceived in the homage he pays to her. For the author this does not mean that hers is a secondary job:

*When the Woman gives herself to Man, no matter how she does it,<sup>19</sup> she bestows on him half the world ! And it is in bestowing herself that she takes part in man's creation of cultural activities. That gift is a revelation, but it is a veiled one. Even Beatrice comes veiled to meet Dante.*

The veil, which covers the bride on the wedding day; the nun and the widow,<sup>20</sup> is taken as a metaphysical symbol for the female's "domain of the invisible: love, kindness, piety, solicitude and caring." – Their substance is not only kept hidden from the world view,<sup>21</sup> as they are 'betrayed' by worldly values. Thus, von Le Fort condemns modern fashion because it means "the exclusion of the veil, which implies the destruction of the feminine mystery;"<sup>22</sup> the use of contraceptives – "a betrayal of her vocation" – the feminist movement and divorce.

The author speaks harsher about woman's faults and even suggests that man does not repudiate woman without her being responsible for it.<sup>23</sup> She prescribes muteness for woman, and praises her near invisibility in History

*Each time one attentively hears the secular choir, it is Man's voice that is heard. With very few exceptions, we cannot feel women's presence other than in the silent plenitude which follows and sustains male chants.... Biology teaches us*

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<sup>18</sup> See the discussion about the phrase ' Behind a great man...'in chapter 3 of this thesis.

<sup>19</sup> For Gertrude von Le Fort the biblical precept that man should know woman (therefore that woman should give herself to man) must be understood in the double meaning of physical and spiritual knowledge, what the author calls *mysterium caritatis*. LE FORT, 1953

<sup>20</sup> Possibly influenced by LE FORT, 1953, Geraldo Pires de Sousa named one of his religious manual: '*Na Escolha do Futuro: Veu de Noiva Veu de Virgem Veu de Irmã*' (Literally: 'The Choice of Her Future: the Bride's veil; the Virgin's veil; the Nun's veil')..

<sup>21</sup> LE FORT, 1953:25. Paul Claudel an author very much favoured by the Brazilian Catholic intellectuals in the 1950s similarly wrote in the preface to his *Partage de Midi* that woman is 'someone on whose brow is inscribed the word 'mystery. ( quoted in DALY, 1968:23). GENEVOIS, 1959, (1959:33) says that much has been written about '*the female mystery*' without reaching a conclusion. And this he also fails.

<sup>22</sup> LE FORT, 1953:25

<sup>23</sup> (*And the woman who transgress God's plan towards her, is far worst than man when he does the same*) ' LE FORT, 1953:82. It is reminiscent of a 'machista' joke which is very popular in Brazil : "When a man beats his wife, he does not always know the reason. But the wife always knows why she deserves it." On the other hand, women uses to complain that no matter what happens [at home, or with her family], she is always to blame. And, at the end, Gertrude von Le Fort gives theological arguments for it.

*that Woman does not need to show or use her talents to be present in History; however, without being noted, she introduces them through Motherhood.*<sup>24</sup>

Selfless, the Eternal Woman achieves not individual realisation but merely generic fulfilment in motherhood, physical or spiritual. For the author, proof lies in the fact that [ great] women are mothers of genius. She naïvely contrasts this with “ the great men’s sons who have frequently been insignificant beings“ forgetting the obvious fact that even these insignificant beings had also had mothers.

In the end von Le Fort and her followers are inflexible defenders of patriarchal order and of the social status quo. Likewise José Baeteman - by the 1950s already an old-fashioned author - they continued to offer a stereotypical portrait of women. Although these authors claimed to be undertaking a high level of symbolism, that is at the domain of the abstract, they continually

*descend to the level of the historical facts, making dogmatic assertions about what should or should not be the role of existing individuals, in order to keep them in line with the immutable symbols*<sup>25</sup>

### *The Biological Conditioning Of Woman's Role*

Gertrud von Le Fort also placed a great emphasis on woman's biological conditioning which puts her closer to nature, unlike man who is associated with culture.<sup>26</sup> In metaphorical terms she stated :

*Mothers are always the same and only the beneficent earth could be compared to her – the earth which silently brings, and bequests its gifts and always renews them, till its triumph over the limits of matter, only possible to reach through the humble submission to the same earthly matter. Thus entirely devoted to the humble daily needs, day by day the motherly woman triumphs over daily life, only because she makes it bearable and the more she triumphs, and the better she becomes, the less can her victory be noted by the others.*<sup>27</sup>

After being caressed by such beautiful images, there came the prosaic conditionings of her ‘feminine nature.’ For instance, Dominican friars Desmarais and Genevois<sup>28</sup> claimed that

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<sup>24</sup> LE FORT, *ibid.*:31.

<sup>25</sup> DALY, 1966:106-107.

<sup>26</sup> This assumption believed to be universal was the starting point for Michele Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere's book *Woman Culture and Society*, whose impact was very great in anthropological studies about woman in the 1970s. The critiques and revisions made of their premises by several authors, including Rosaldo herself, do not undermine its importance.

<sup>27</sup> LE FORT, 1953:117.

<sup>28</sup> GENEVOIS (1959) mainly the chapter 'The Visage of Eve'. This is a more theological account about marriage and family. In that particular chapter, the author studies woman's psychology. Desmarais' books are written in the style of chats about practical problems in the daily life of couples. He also tried to put across the same theological viewpoint in a more plain

rather than defects as popular wisdom regards, even lesser female characteristics prove women's natural vocation for motherhood. Taking for granted the social division of gender roles and tasks, they candidly explain that women's 'natural destiny' (motherhood) stimulates their nervous system and sensuous faculties making them more cunning than men's. Genevois says "I read that nature made female's field of vision larger than men's<sup>29</sup> — because she needs to be more attentive and permanently vigilant to fulfil the needs of child rearing."<sup>30</sup> Her 'motherly destiny' also conditioned her intellectual life and capacity, and explains woman's more intuitive than deductive intelligence:<sup>31</sup> they are careful watchers, paying more attention to the singular, the concrete and to the smallest detail,<sup>32</sup> what also makes women talkative because they have so many things to tell. Rather than a demerit it is an important part of their condition, since otherwise babies would not learn to speak (at least in the authors' argument).<sup>33</sup>

However, such inductive intelligence and intuitive capacity make woman intellectually more superficial and more susceptible to errors than man. Thus, this generic woman "is entirely at ease when the matter is not a rational one and can easily reach the supernatural world. However it is not clear if Genevois meant that her understanding is more akin to a child's logic, or if he endorses those who attribute to woman a pre-rational logic.<sup>34</sup> His view dismisses the social and ideological reasons, which made the church a feminine space, attributing to women the spiritual legacy of society.

Women's destiny is intimately linked to that of men, since her psychological nature is resumed in 'altercentrism.' That is the capacity of finding in another person the centre of one's life, and only in that way reaching an equilibrium. That 'other person' must be primarily the child, and secondarily the husband. Genevois agrees with Gina Lombroso's: 'In order to live motherhood in its fullness, the woman must be able to enjoy the pleasures and to suffer the sorrows of her children as if pleasures and sorrows were hers.'<sup>35</sup> Helene Deutsch, also quoted by Genevois, added: "paradoxically, this mother's love is a more altruistic love for herself".<sup>36</sup>

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language, using ordinary, or up-to-date examples and slang. The same technique was used in the meetings of the '*Movimento Familiar Cristão*' (Christian Family Movement), see chapter 3.

<sup>29</sup> "Women's eyes are like Kodak cameras, only of much better quality." (DESMARAIS, 1952:194).

<sup>30</sup> GENEVOIS, 1959:37. See also DESMARAIS, 1952:193-195.

<sup>31</sup> DESMARAIS, 1952:194 explains that she has to have a special 'feeling' to understand the meaning of a baby's crying.

<sup>32</sup> GENEVOIS, 1959:36; DESMARAIS, 1952:194.

<sup>33</sup> DESMARAIS, 1952:193 - 195. GENEVOIS, 1959:36 heighten his argument: "Just imagine having a mute mother!" as if it was something not only too grave, but impossible.

<sup>34</sup> GENEVOIS, 1959:37.

<sup>35</sup> The same author, Gina Lombroso, is also quoted by LEVALLET-MONTAL, 1955,;24. She gives as her source M Dutoit '*Chrétiennes e Païennes*.' without further information. GENEVOIS, 1959's book does not provide the bibliography used.

<sup>36</sup> GENEVOIS, 1959:40-41.

According to Genevois and Desmarais, as Woman needs Man's collaboration to fulfil her motherly destiny, nature made woman dependent on him. Moreover it made her "young, beautiful and seductive" (sic) in order to attract man. But Man "does not need to be handsome, since woman does not care so much about this, as she does about his demonstrations of power and ability to earn a living."<sup>37</sup>

Paradoxically, in spite of its misguided ideological bias, it must be stressed that the myth of the Eternal Woman inspired religious authors who represented the 'modern' Catholic ideology about woman in the 1940s and 1950s.

### *Woman's Vocation*

Religious literature for girls located the question of women's status in the broader context of the so called 'vocation of a woman.'<sup>38</sup> They aimed to help their readers to choose one's true 'vocation', since anyone could equally be regarded as 'part of the plan of God.' Manuals asked : " Who will be waiting for me? A husband? God? or the Other?"<sup>39</sup> "Which veil will I wear: The veil of a bride; the veil of a nun; the veil of the virgins?"<sup>40</sup> In metaphorical, and assumed as poetic terms, Ody Azevedo classifies them:

*The Vocation for Marriage = A Path of Roses*  
*The Vocation for Religious life = A Garden of Lilies*  
*The Vocation for Celibacy = Violets along the footpath.*<sup>41</sup>

The choice of the flowers reveals the popular representations about these vocations: roses identified with beauty, lilies with purity and violets with humility. Moreover, it expose that although in theory the three vocations were regarded as equivalents, actually different and hierarchical qualifications: were attached to them Matrimony was "the great Sacrament;<sup>42</sup> becoming a nun was 'the most beautiful and perfect vocations although the most excruciating';<sup>43</sup> Celibate was a tragedy compensated by the excellence of an ever honoured virginity. <sup>44</sup> These

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<sup>37</sup> GENEVOIS, *ibid.*:39.

<sup>38</sup> Soares D'Azevedo, considered religion the only vocation one. He started his book *Minha Filha Quer Casar* by saying: " Is there a special vocation to marriage, as there is one for medicine, engineering or even the priesthood? No. At least not for the woman. To her, marriage is a call from Nature." By contrast, the religious vocation was a 'calling from God.' The image of God touching the shoulder of a girl and calling her to follow Him at once, was a very powerful one, that seems to be shared by Catholic girls all over the world.

<sup>39</sup> STADLER, 1956

<sup>40</sup> SOUSA, 1953.

<sup>41</sup> AZEVEDO, 1955 :157.

<sup>42</sup> BAETEMAN, 1958:303-304.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*:335

<sup>44</sup> LE FORT, 1953:37

authors agreed that it was an imposed vocation — few persons would easily choose to remain celibate. Spinsterhood was dictated for those women wanting to have a profession, since reconciling family life and career was considered as impracticable task. For the others, manuals warned that “a heart carries better its cross when seriously absorbed in duties.”<sup>45</sup> But their prescription would be regarded as making ‘the cross’ still worst:

*‘Try not to please the world, wearing luxurious dresses; avoid parties and profane leisure. Your place is not there any more. You shall die for the world, at least for this world that you know. Why should you desire to hear and see things that shall remain strange to you ? Why should you hurry to be the spectator of pleasures and joys which have not been made for you?’*<sup>46</sup>

Although in such literature marriage was said to be the only vocation ‘to be elevated to the rank of a Sacrament’<sup>47</sup> in fact they seemed to consider it inferior. The old ambivalence between the praise of the body (at the level of discourse) and the repudiation of sex was still present. Baeteman tells what happens when a girl “who had been called by God to become a nun” decides to marry:

*All the angels in Heaven had become quiet; they interrupted their joyful songs and covered themselves with a mourning veil... Oh, Cry angels from heaven! Cry all the virgins who had been waiting for her! For the one who had been chosen by Christ preferred a husband from Earth...*

*A man captured God's bride and had put a diamond jewel on the same finger where God would put His wedding ring. She put a man's name in her heart where only the name of God was to be inscribed. And the girl loved more the man than she loved God.....The divine Spouse had reserved for you joys as enduring as the eternity, and pleasures as sweet as His heart. But the girl didn't want them...*

And worst of all

*Oh, if she only knew the caresses He reserved for her; the confidences He yearned to tell her; the celestial flowers He would make bloom under her steps, even if they were her path to Mount Calvary, where God wanted to lead her. Now cry ! How I will lament her if she suffers! But I would mourn her still more, if she still could be happy now !.*<sup>48</sup>

This sugary lament follows the tradition of the personal affective relationship with Christ a possessive and jealous husband as shown in the writings of saints from the sixteenth century

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<sup>45</sup> My emphasis. Ibid.:349. D'AZEVEDO, 1949:95-96.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.:95-96

<sup>47</sup> The ritual of becoming a priest is also a sacrament, but not the one of becoming a nun.

<sup>48</sup> BAETEMAN, 1958:347-348.

such as Rosa de Lima, Margarida Alacoque and others.<sup>49</sup> In the end, they seemed to regard marriage with the same suspicion as the early Fathers of the Church had done.

*Marriage conforms to the order that God created for the world. However we can not forget that the vocation to the honest celibacy, and more, to the religious life in a convent, are goods of so excellent degree that in comparison, all the advantages of marriage do not deserve to be proposed or even enunciated.<sup>50</sup>*

Nonetheless, marriage was the main issue in religious manuals because it was assumed that the majority of girls would be willing to marry. Their first purpose was to teach them the official word of the Church about Marriage and Sexuality, whose three major points were the rule of chastity and virginity for single women, the prohibition of a second marriage and condemnation of any form of contraceptives. They also strongly advised against inter-religious marriage, since that was the Pre-Concilium era, when the ecumenical ideal was still unthinkable.

The authors spoke about a remote preparation for marriage – the education of the character, of the will, of the disposition for sacrifice and renunciation. They also stressed the importance of physical preparation through health care. The immediate preparation for marriage consisted in choosing the best suitor and living a “chaste period of *namoro*.” Authors analysed at length its cares warning against the illusions of romantic love; and encouraging them to concentrate on finding true love.<sup>51</sup>

## *True Love*

Soares D’Azevedo warns that there are three sorts of love: first that of animals, “which is ravishing, ardent, passionate. It is pure instinct, the dirty satisfaction of the senses;” second, human love “which has much in common with the animal. Indeed it can purify the material impulses;” third is Christian love, “which is supernatural love”<sup>52</sup> The author explains what this means by a kind of pun: “Love should be born in the soul. One should love with the soul, and love the lover’s soul more than anything else.”<sup>53</sup>

José Baeteman quotes several sources to confirm his point of view totally against the idea of romantic love and happy-ending (“They say to the girl; you are going to marry to achieve

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<sup>49</sup> See chapter 2

<sup>50</sup> D’AZEVEDO, 1958:4

<sup>51</sup> See the excursus II.

<sup>52</sup> D’AZEVEDO, 1948:31.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.: 33.



happiness. It is not true.”) These authors are severe in their warnings relating happiness in courtship and the correspondent and inevitable sorrows in marriage.<sup>54</sup>

*God, who had made everything perfect, wanted love to be the poesy of marriage. But be not mislead by it. The tenderness that inundates your heart, this paradise you believe to be reaching is nothing but a temporary haven where you can rest whilst young.*

For them marriage was but a ‘valley of tears’ - “a sublime hardship whose ailments you will count day by day (nevertheless do love those ailments because they will transform you into a woman)”<sup>55</sup> The reference to Genesis is implicit by opposition in the metaphor of Paradise to describe the state of being in love; and in the allusion of being transformed into woman. The roots of such association lay back in medieval Christianity, in the idea of moral pollution of intercourse.<sup>56</sup> No wonder why these authors stressed the price to be paid for love, since no happiness could be ascribed to the daughters of Eve.<sup>57</sup> Notwithstanding marriage will transform them into woman, which can be read in the double sense of becoming adult and of losing virginity.<sup>58</sup>

Frieda Stadler considers love always an exception, “a rare gift bestowed by God for a few exceptional souls...” despite all the romantic writings on the contrary. Thus she alerts her readers:

*If you find an honest man, whose temperament and age suit you, and if he wants to conquer a wife by licit ways; do not hesitate and do not have scruples about the authenticity of your love. During your engagement, you can test if the intimacy annoys you. If it is not so, you can be sure that love will come later.*<sup>59</sup>

Love will come provided the couple share the same purposes: the desire to create a family to be a haven for both; the aspiration of leading each to other along the spiritual path

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<sup>54</sup> “Intoxicate yourself with the sight of the sun, but do not forget to measure the shadow it gives to you.” ‘Be prepared and strengthen your will to deserve it, for you will struggle without truce, and you will pay a high price for your happiness.’ (Yvonne Sarcey)

<sup>55</sup> BAETEMAN, 1958: 316.

<sup>56</sup> As Eleanor McLaughlin points out: *The biological consequences of marriage – the loss of virginity, the getting and bearing of children – are for the woman, in the medieval perspective, not simply natural process but poignant and painful symbols of her status as the daughter of Eve and the inferior nature of her body.* MCLAUGHLIN, 1979:246.

<sup>57</sup> For the Catholic ideology about women and sexuality see DALY, 1968; BIRD 1979; MCLAUGHLIN, 1979; PARVEY, 1987; RUETHER, 1979; FIORENZA, 1981; WARNER, 1985; ARMSTRONG, 1986. For models of womanhood provided by the Catholic religion see WILLIAMS, 1975; WARNER, 1983, 1985; ATKINSON, 1987; FURLONG, 1987; HENDRICK, 1987; MILES, 1987; POE, 1987.

<sup>58</sup> Another source of future sorrows will be man himself, since he reveals his true self after marriage. Baeteman warns: “love your husband for the qualities you have found whilst engaged; forgive his faults because he won’t trouble to hide them from you anymore.”<sup>58</sup> He replicates a kind of popular wisdom widely shared by women. BAETEMAN, *ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> STADLER, 1956:60 61.

towards God; woman's aim to "embellish the life of the one who offers her the privileges of being a wife,"<sup>60</sup> moreover, that they are determined to remain married no matter what will happen. Stadler concludes "their marriage will be much better than the love marriage of two persons of inferior qualities and purposes."<sup>61</sup> Paradoxically, if these authors condemned the girl who looks for romantic love instead of looking for 'moral qualities', they also despised those who prefer money to romantic love:

### *The Winnowing of the Best Suitor*

After dispelling the illusions about romantic love and proposing marriage as a path to sanctity, the next step was to guide the reader in her choice of a fiancé, taking into account several issues:

#### *Religion*

Religious authors agreed that being a good Catholic should be the first and principal requirement for a suitor.<sup>62</sup> Negromonte refutes the statement : "I'd rather marry an atheist than a wicked Catholic man, since there are some who are Catholic just because they have been baptised; religion does not mean that much." He says:

*I do not want to sing a eulogy of the bad Catholic, but the Church prefers to see you married to him than to the atheist, and that is the right thing to do. The bad Catholic man has the faith, albeit weak.<sup>63</sup> Deep in his heart underlies the religious sentiment and the Christian education which he received at home.<sup>64</sup>*

Frieda Stadler disagrees with him: marriage must be based on the qualities a person already has, and religion in addition, rather than on the qualities he probably could acquire merely because of his religion.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.:62.

<sup>62</sup> D'AZEVEDO, 1949:158; D'AZEVEDO, 1948:129-132; NEGROMONTE, 1949:170-179; LEVALLET-MONTAL, 1955:138; SOUSA, 1958: 78-79; 231.

<sup>63</sup> This is the idea ever presented in romantic novels, chiefly in M.Delly's ( See chapter 5 of this thesis). The pure religious heroine always succeeded in converting the impious, mundane hero, because the seeds of the 'grace' had already been planted. Only one of their novels, inverts the stereotyped situation and characters. It is the heroine, whose mother died in her early childhood, who is raised without religious education. She is easily converted by her pious fiancé, since her mother had given her the first notions of religion. *Alma em Flor* (translated of "La Jeune Fille Emmurée").

<sup>64</sup> He considered that it will demand fewer efforts to awaken him than it would cost to convert an impious man, or to persuade a heretic to give out his rancorous prejudices against the Catholic faith. NEGROMONTE, 1949: 177.

<sup>65</sup> STADLER, 1956: 64.

Although inter-religious marriages were radically condemned, marrying a Protestant was considered less problematic than marrying a heretic, but the Church would give the agreement to the first just “to avoid a greater evil.”<sup>66</sup> The daily life of these couples was painted with dark colours — without sharing an important part of their life, happiness would hardly be possible.<sup>67</sup> As a final argument, Álvaro Negromonte compares the rituals of both weddings:

*If the rigorous ecclesiastical discipline, as a special favour, allows the religious wedding, it forbids all the signs of the ritual. There will be no banns – because [...] a bad example like this must be silenced rather than announced. The wedding will not be celebrate in the Church but in any house – without an altar or sacred icons, sacred vestments for the priest, holy water, prayers or blesses for the couple. The ceremony will be limited to in the couple’s declaration that they want to marry, while staying hand in hand. Then the priest will just say in Portuguese.<sup>68</sup> “By the authority that had been given to me, I proclaim you husband and wife”.*

And he completed the picture:

*This is the dreadful curse which carries in itself the germs of a bad future. Compare this scene with the festive and rich nuptial liturgy, full of prayers, blessings and happy wishes from the Church for its good children. Compare, and you will see the differences.<sup>69</sup>*

Although the exigencies were the same for both man and woman, there was widespread belief that religion is chiefly a feminine matter. Woman is responsible for the spiritual legacy not only of her family but also of the whole society.

## *Money and Social Class*

Suitable partners would be found in 'serious places' – church, family parties – and never in gatherings for leisure, chiefly in the more expensive places – as if there were an association between poverty and good character. Wealth should be the last element to be considered in a suitor.<sup>70</sup> Authors condemn the practice of sport, dances, cinema as leisure, as a way of meeting young men, as an occasion for flirting and starting *namoro*. There girls would hardly meet religious, hard working and honest men.

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<sup>66</sup> The greater evil was the celebration of marriage in a Protestant church, or worst, the conversion to another religion.

<sup>67</sup> The author seem to assumes that the religious one in the couple would be the woman.

<sup>68</sup> My underline. At that time the liturgical language was Latin, considered more solemn and beautiful.

<sup>69</sup> NEGROMONTE, 1949:172-173.

<sup>70</sup> LEVALLET-MONTAL, 1955:140; D'AZEVEDO, 1949:162-166; AZEVEDO, 1948:126 -129; NEGROMONTE, 1949:186-189.

Paradoxically, the same 'defects' that they despised as sentimentalism, became qualities when confronted to the pursue of money and social status. After their considerations about the exceptionality of Love, and advising readers to content themselves with a honest plain suitor [to whom they have no more than fellow feeling (and whose intimacy is bearable)], they also bemoan woman who "is able to find her happiness marrying a man who inspires in her no more than respect and sympathy" ...but who is very rich. And after saying the same in relation to that plain suitors, they seemed shocked: "Often people say that love will come later! Be not deceived by these false words!"

Authors were not only ambivalent in relation to romantic love confronted by money; they also totally endorsed social prejudices in relation to 'unequal marriages' - in spite of all the qualities of the other partner. Although, money and social status could not be included in a girl's considerations, they stressed the need, "for future conjugal happiness, that the couple should be from the same social class."<sup>71</sup> They warned of the dangers of social, economical, intellectual and racial differences.

It is worth quoting at length the evils conjured up by Álvaro Negromonte's 'real' story about such unions:

*An educated and rich young man had married the baker's daughter. She was unintelligent, almost illiterate, had bad manners but was very pretty. Very soon her beauty disappeared leaving the ignorant, uneducated woman unable to make any social progress. Thirty years later she still pronounced her husband's name incorrectly, she did not know how to handle the cutlery properly, she did not formulate two linked sentences and nor did she knew how to receive a distinguished person. She just knew the issues that interest the people who remain "beyond the pantry." at the house.<sup>72</sup> She was never able to integrate into her husband's family. Consequently, he gradually drifted apart from them. The husband always sneers at her, transforming their life into hell. Their schooled but uneducated children are ashamed of their mother and make fun from her mistakes. The poor woman suffers a lot for something that is not her fault. She probably would be happier had she married a man of her social milieu. Probably he never would pay attention in her bad manners, because his behaviour would be quite the same<sup>73</sup>*

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<sup>71</sup> LEVALLET-MONTAL, 1955: 140

<sup>72</sup> That is, the servants who, in this case, are equal to the lady of the house. It is important to remember the rigid separation between the social and the service parts of the Brazilian middle-class houses. It explains the picturesque way of labelling the lady of the house' socially unequal friends.

<sup>73</sup> NEGROMONTE, 1949:191.

## Health

The discourse of eugenics had a great appeal, and the authors spoke about heredity, atavism and tares “whose laws, although not absolute, are ponderous and must be taken into serious consideration.”<sup>74</sup> So, Álvaro Negromonte regrets that ‘sentimentalism’ could be the requirement for choosing a conjugal partner. Soares D’Azevedo, who was strongly influenced by the *integralists*<sup>75</sup> stated:

*Do not think that health is only responsible for a better management of housework – its schedules allowing the efficient accomplishment of thousands of little tasks that constitute the housewife’s daily duties.*

*Good health is also linked to the moral and spiritual life of the whole family. It irradiates optimism, makes one covet projects of beautiful castles, drives people forward, eliminates obstacles, dismisses the worries of the spirits, reducing to the minimum the difficulties, irritations and deceptions that life always brings to everyone.*<sup>76</sup>

He considers those parents criminal who hide from ingenuous and naïve men their daughter’s chronic illness or her sterility. He pities these husbands who will “have to give to the doctor, to the dentist, to the pharmacy every penny from the salary earned month by month at the expense of hard labour,”<sup>77</sup> and foresees ruinous consequences for the couple’s future physical and moral well-being.

Likewise, Negromonte warns the parents about the danger of their daughters “marrying living corpses and very soon catching putrefaction in their veins and transmitting it to their children.”<sup>78</sup> Although at that time, discreet suspicion prevailed that the action of the State was a usurpation of the attributions of the Church, Soares D’Azevedo concedes

*Some modern States require a pre-nuptial medical examination. Although there are dangers that they can surpass the limits, this procedure should be applauded without reservation. Still, it is a duty of the State to be zealous about*

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<sup>74</sup> LEVALLET-MONTAL, 1955:140. Álvaro Negromonte, 1949, quotes some examples comparing the descendants of “Jonathan Edwards, born in 1703” and “Max Jukes’s, his contemporary, a drunken vagabond,” Whilst among the first they could find lecturers, doctors, priests, and so on in the other descendant “nor one person had contributed to the well-being of the community, and all of them had cost to State an amount of six millions, fabulous at that time.” Health care was linked to morality and patriotism. NEGROMONTE, 1949:182-183. Not only are the data vague, but the author has not provided the due source.

<sup>75</sup> The Brazilian version of fascism

<sup>76</sup> D’AZEVEDO, 1948:158. The text is very ambiguous. By the way the author writes the reader does not know if it is healthy people, or health as an entity that brings such benefits to the home.

<sup>77</sup> D’AZEVEDO, 1949:50-51.

<sup>78</sup> NEGROMONTE, 1949, p 181. Also quoted by DESMARAIS, 1955:40-41

*the future generations – only vigorous and healthy citizens will be able to give the best of themselves to build a greater and more beautiful country.*<sup>79</sup>

However these authors had difficulties in reconciling the appeal of the scientific discourse about heredity and their fidelity to religious doctrine. Therefore, in spite of endorsing the discourse of eugenics, they limit its weight with religious doctrinaire principles. The prevalent idea was that supernatural life must surpass the worries about healthier progeny – and for them the couple has the absolute right to take the decision whether or not to marry. Maria Madalena pursues this idea further:

*One must take into account that the gift of life – even a weak life – is the supreme gift to one's descendants.... It is better to exist than not to exist at all. Even if it were for a few seconds, even if it meant an illness forever, this is an opportunity to earn eternal life in Heaven.*<sup>80</sup>

Desmarais reassures readers about the possible spiritual consequences of such marriages, explaining that “the soul is not directly affected (by heredity) since it is created at once by God.”<sup>81</sup> His strange explanation conflated ideas about genetics and contamination:

*The body comes from the parents and brings in itself the parent's good and bad tendencies which they transmitted to their descendants. Naturally, in the course of the vital germs' evolution, some cells disappear, taking with them the tendencies encapsulated in them [...] To have children who bring in themselves the powerful germs which induce them to virtue – in spite of Original sin – she must choose her husband from an honest and healthy family.*<sup>82</sup>

In spite of the probabilities that the problematic heritage could go away with some ‘vital germs’ – according to his explanation – he strongly warns that the Church is very cautious in giving permission for close relatives to marry, because of the laws of heredity.

So they were quite ambivalent about this matter fearing that to give to eugenics great importance would mean putting health above morality “as in pagan times.” Negromonte warns

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<sup>79</sup> D'AZEVEDO, 1949:50. R. Oliveira regards the pre-nuptial examination as “a natural way God gives us to guarantee the health of our descendants.” By ‘natural’ she possibly means ‘simple, easy’. Unlike Soares D’Azevedo she is against the intervention of the State in these matters. “It cannot be a right of any government to make demands to the families or of the conscience of the future couple. Because, in the end, it is a prerogative of each person to resolve one’s destiny according to God’s law.” in RIBEIRO OLIVEIRA:80. See also DESMARAIS, 1955:40-41.

<sup>80</sup> RIBEIRO OLIVEIRA:81.

<sup>81</sup> DESMARAIS, 1955:41. The author was a Dominican friar, thus a follower of Aquinas’ theology. Thomas Aquinas extensively reflected over the creation of the human being and the relationship between body and soul. To examine these arguments goes beyond the scope of this thesis.

<sup>82</sup> DESMARAIS, 1955:41. It is worth stressing the role that germ theory played in the public imagination in the first decades of this century. See among others FORTY, 1986 (The chapter “Hygiene and Cleanliness”) ; MCCLARY, 1980; ‘MATHEWS, 1987; WRIGHT, 1975.

that “the family is more sacred than the state, and men are created in the first place not for earth and the temporal, but for heaven and eternity.”<sup>83</sup>

## *Gender Stereotypes*

In their advice, religious writers reinforced all the stereotypes about gender roles, stressing that woman should always be, or pretend to be, in an inferior position to that of her husband. She should be younger, intellectually inferior and economically dependent, assuming also her presumed sexlessness.<sup>84</sup>

Authors strongly advised against a great difference of age between the couple. Soares D’Azevedo says that in both cases one should argue if it is not on account of a lack of morality that “a young, healthy man marries an elder woman” or “a girl, in the spring of her life, frivolously marries a venerable old man”.<sup>85</sup> However, he also quotes, and thereby endorses, Baronesa Staffe who says

*“What I really dislike is a wife older than her husband. I would rather prefer to see a girl married to a man who is ten, twelve or even fifteen years her senior, than to a man a year younger than her.”*<sup>86</sup>

What could be the reasons for this sort of unilateral condemnation? They used biological arguments to endorse their opinions: women ages earlier than men; the children of the elders are not as healthy as the youngster’s ones.<sup>87</sup> However, the key point is the image of sexless or powerless woman which is threatened in several ways, since popularly, woman’s money, or status, is considered the motivation for such unions.<sup>88</sup>

First, his possible economic dependence ran against patriarchal principles, and was pictured as the woman’s purchase of an object of pleasure – inverting the relationship of a man and a prostitute. Second, it is the image of a dangerous experimenting old woman (a witch?)

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<sup>83</sup> D’AZEVEDO, 1948:143.

<sup>84</sup> In terms, because when condemning the relationship with a man many years her senior, an author warns “Although women are sexually less exigent, they do not marry to live in abstinence.” NEGROMONTE, 1949:179.

<sup>85</sup> In this case, the author thinks that the parents should be blamed, because “girls are educated in the school of blind obedience.”

<sup>86</sup> I could not find more information about this author, and this kind of book usually does not contain a bibliography. However, there is a list of books on the first page of D’Azevedo’s book without any further indication about publisher, year or place and where Baronesa Staffe is listed as the author of ‘*A Mulher na Família*.’

<sup>87</sup> NEGROMONTE, 1949: 180.

<sup>88</sup> The report “*Elas são mais velhas que os maridos*” illustrates quite well this point. Speaking about Ginger Roger’s husband, 18 years younger French unknown actor, the magazine stated - “*Ginger Rogers used to attract men because of her beauty, now prestige is her main attraction.*” *Cinelândia* 2 (3): 28. May 1958. In Brazil, this sort of union is popularly referred as ‘*golpe-do-bau*’ (literally, ‘coup of the chest’ [of money]), it is ambiguously regarded as proof of lack of character, tarnishing man’s honour, but also as proof of intelligence, luck and ability.

perverting the youngster; threatening the legitimated image of the dangerous and seductive men.<sup>89</sup> Third, the possibility of an elder wife being more experienced, perhaps wiser, than her husband, an inversion of the 'natural' hierarchy in marriage. As Geraldo Pires de Sousa warns girls: "Do not believe when someone says that men fancy intelligent women. To please them hide half of your brains but expose your heart in all its extension." And concludes his argument "it will take long before men will be able to forgive a woman who could intellectually be compared to them."<sup>90</sup>

The equilibrium of intellectual level is considered another key point for the success of the relationship. However, Álvaro Negromonte warns:

*A woman does not need to be at the same level as her husband – yet a deserving wife must try to understand the husband's business, his preference, being able to chat about these issues with him. However, it is embarrassing for a man, a source of humiliation, to hear his wife talking about things he does not understand.*<sup>91</sup>

However, the author does not suggest that "deserving husbands" should try to understand the issues which interest his 'intellectual' wife. Thus, a more intelligent woman "would look for a spirit akin to hers outside the home and these 'spirits' are always embodied in another man," and the presumably consequence will be adultery.

The reason for the man to be more intelligent is 'woman's nature:' ("she is naturally complicated, incoherent and illogical..." thus, man must have sufficient skills "to disentangle this labyrinth." Then

*if he dominates her with his intelligence and understanding, she will be bound to him. And he will maintain her voluntary and lovely submission, because she will be pleased by his superiority.*<sup>92</sup>

Finally there was the learning of submission. These manuals reflected the ambiguity of Catholicism: the redemption of Christ makes everyone equal under the same faith; but the Pauline precept reinforced misogyny.<sup>93</sup> To adjust human equality to the precept of woman's

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<sup>89</sup> Of course, this is not simply a problem of the 1950s, or even in Brazil. Apart from certain groups, chiefly the more intellectual ones, the partnership of an older woman and her 'toyboy' still provokes gossip and criticism.

<sup>90</sup> My underline. SOUSA, 1958:49.

<sup>91</sup> "a man who can only talk about his business and worries outside the home is bound to turn away from his wife and family." NEGROMONTE, *ibid.* p 184.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.* p 185. My underline.

<sup>93</sup> "particular characteristics which distinguish the two sexes are so clearly revealed that only obstinate blindness or sectarianism could neglect them." D'AZEVEDO, *ibid.*



submission, the church takes arguments from biology<sup>94</sup> illustrating the ideal complementary of sexes with a biological model:

*(The Church) does not want heart separated from the head in the moral body that is the family [...] Indeed, the husband is the head whilst the wife is the heart. If the first has the primacy of power, the second has (and must claim) the primacy of love.*<sup>95</sup>

Whilst male authors did not dispute the question of man's headship, Monique Levallet-Montal put the issue in other terms:

*God wanted man to be the head of this little society (family). The woman must obey him: that is the theory. In practice everyone knows that the ideal does not always happen. Sometimes, the superiority of the wife over the husband becomes visible – either by intelligence or by her will power and enterprise. This anomaly does not invalidate God's precept. In these cases, the woman must use her skills and discernment avoiding vexing the husband for the insignificant role he plays in the family.*<sup>96</sup>

She agrees that the 'norm' is the home where the husband is the incontestable head of the family, not only by law, but rather for his own qualities. Notwithstanding her admonition – “whatever happens the wife owes him respect and submission” – the author also advises readers to become accomplished in feminine skills to slowly change the situation and achieve equality in sharing power in family.<sup>97</sup>

### *“Feminine Nature” in the Catholic Doctrine about Matrimony*

The Church could justify its theology of matrimony from the assumption that female biology (the ‘feminine nature’) is the fundamental conditioning of a woman’s role. Assuming that woman is weaker than man, she will need someone to look after her and her offspring providing them with money and food; children will also need the aid of a father for their education, since “a man can give them what is impossible for her to provide. And that impossibility is rooted in the fact of that she is a woman.”<sup>98</sup> It is therefore more appropriate that the father is a stable and permanent husband rather than a transitory generator.<sup>99</sup> These arguments were refined to

<sup>94</sup> Pius XII, *Address to Women of Catholic Action*, 21 October 1945. quoted by DALY, 1968:72. My underline.

<sup>95</sup> LEVALLET-MONTAL: 49.

<sup>96</sup> My underline. LEVALLET-MONTAL: 48.

<sup>97</sup> See *The Power Of The Weak*, chapter 3 of this thesis.

<sup>98</sup> GENEVOIS, 1959:38. LEVALLET-MONTAL, 1955:38 softens his argument - “The father left alone will be the tough authority, the cold reasoning, a heavy strength. A mother left alone, will give them undisciplined love, sweetness without direction, caressing without discipline.”

<sup>99</sup> This is the argument used in similar words by all the authors of religious manuals. GENEVOIS, 1959:38-39; LEVALLET-MONTAL, 1955:38; NEGROMONTE, 1961:46, 56 - 57

support the Catholic position against divorce: that the indissolubility of marriage protects woman whilst divorce debases her.

For Negromonte “woman's biological constitution requires an indissoluble marriage, otherwise she would be in a position of inferiority. “ She ages earlier than man and “the greater number of divorces occur around the tenth year of marriage, precisely when she will only be guaranteed by the power of affection since her physical attractiveness must already be faded.” However, when divorce comes at an earlier age, a new relationship will be quite precarious because it will be based only on her beauty (sic) and she could not count on the guarantee given by an indissoluble marriage, anymore.”<sup>100</sup>

His second argument evokes woman's psychological constitution. He argues that her psyche demands the tranquillity of an indissoluble home, since “statistics prove that a divorced woman ends in madness and suicide.” Moreover, “for being weaker than man in his physical nature, woman is elevated at home by the respect that only virtue can infuse.” The author does not mean her physical constitution, as it appears at first glance. Rather, he alludes to a failure of moral disposition, which demands the environment of the home (under the surveillance of a husband) to affirm her virtue. Again it is the old image of Eve which is behind his argument.

He concludes that only indissoluble marriage protects woman: a) by giving her “the wife's role, which puts her in a position in the family similar to the father's. A position not of an illusive equality, rather the one awarded by a higher dignity of tasks.” (An impressive statement that does not seem to mean much), b) by adorning her with “ the crown of motherhood, by which woman participates of the constitution of home;” and c) by protecting her against the abuses of power or unstable masculine passions. If left to man's discretion she would be reduced to a mere slave.

Prejudices more clearly emerge in Negromonte's accounts to prove that divorce debases woman. He quotes an author named De Bonald [without giving complete information about the source], who said:

*In the constitution of the family, there is no equality between each one's quotas. Man comes to marriage under the protection of his strength, whilst woman brings the exigencies of her weakness. Therefore, in the event of separation, there is also no equality in its results. Man would still have an intact authority. From everything woman brought to marriage virginity, youth, beauty, fecundity, reputation, money only money will she be able to take back... and not every time.<sup>101</sup>*

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<sup>100</sup> NEGROMONTE, 1961.:60- 64.

<sup>101</sup> NEGROMONTE, 1961:61

For Negromonte there is also a huge difference between a divorced man and a divorced woman – although they are equal under the same moral laws, socially woman will be in an inferior condition:

*'Without the halo of virginity; the respect given by her august position at home and the superiority awarded by virtue, very little remains for her: Perhaps only her beauty or the ease in attracting man. It is possible that a lot of them will be looking for her. But very few will want her for a wife. Even then, she can be sure it won't last long.'*<sup>102</sup>

He concludes that, under the illusion of supposed equality, woman would not bother to adapt herself to home life or the temperament of the husband. And these things are her 'natural path to victory'. Rather, she will be devoted to a kind of struggle where the winner is always the stronger that is man. So, the author says, contrary to the proclamations of those favouring divorce, it does not bring the emancipation of woman at all.<sup>103</sup>

Negromonte is totally conditioned by the cultural ideas about woman's honour. For him it is an indisputable fact that women have to rely on men to be considered virtuous and honourable. A woman's character depends entirely on her sexual purity. It does not matter the reason why she divorces, automatically she will become a dishonourable person.<sup>104</sup>

In fact up to the 1970s a '*desquitada*' woman was almost completely stigmatised. The situation was worse when she had daughters, since the daughter of a '*mulher falada*' would be '*falada*,' as well. A separated woman had to live a life of total seclusion, usually fully dedicated to church work, to avoid the stigma. The prejudice against her children was so strong to the point of affecting their social life: many families would not let their offspring play with a '*desquitada*'s' children, let them be their friends. Later, they would not get '*namorados*' from 'good families'.<sup>105</sup> Many families used to boast that they would not allow a *desquitada* or even their children be invited to their house. To avoid this, many couples chose to stay together until their children were established in life, that is when they had already been married into good families, or when the men had got a good job. To have separated parents was a bad handicap and probably in some groups it still is.

Monique Levallet-Montal concludes that the average couple will be in their fifties by the time the youngest child is twenty one, therefore it will be too late to change habits getting a new

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<sup>102</sup> NEGROMONTE, *ibid.*:64.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*:60

<sup>104</sup> Actually until 1977 there was no divorce in Brazil. The legal separation which did not allow a second marriage was called '*desquite*' and *desquitado/desquitada* were the corresponding adjectives for man and woman.

<sup>105</sup> As they used to say, they were considered good just 'for passing the time, not for marrying'.

partner. For her it is a definitive proof in favour of the natural quality of an indissoluble marriage.

## *Sexuality as Disclosed by the Didactic Literature*

### *Manuals For Adolescents*

Preaching could be summed up in the recommendation that sex must be responsible, limited to marriage and strictly ruled. Therefore the Church stressed the need to resist temptations, and opportunities for sin. José Baeteman warns his readers about the issue in subchapters meaningfully named :

1) *Your Heart = Sensibility – a motor to be driven.* 2) *Imagination – a crazy woman to be watched over.* 3) *Passions – forces to be ruled.* 4) *Christian friendship – a necessity of your heart.*<sup>106</sup>

To 'tame' one's heart was the prime means of overcoming the evils of temptation — the worst enemy of chastity — but no one explained what temptations really were:

*About this delicate issue, universal, basic and, at the same time, so serious, you need to have clear ideas. In the critical hours, a puzzle of thinking, desires, struggles, successes, faintness is produced. Senses, imagination, heart, will intervene alternately. And in this apparently inextricable labyrinth of interior activities, convergent or in opposition, many people don't know how to orient themselves, how to judge, how to maintain or recover their inner serenity.*<sup>107</sup>

This quotation is also an example of the circumlocution that was used when writing about the matter. In the whole chapter on the issue, the author does not say a single word that could clarify what the thinking, struggles, desires, or faintness concerned. And this was meant to give the girl clear ideas. However, he warned readers that one should strengthen will, as the best way to succeed against temptations. Habitual resistance to the temptation of indulging himself strengthened his power to resist the temptations of sex:

*Do not fear the screeching of the owl; the spider climbing up your skirt, the fly in your soup, or the wasp buzzing around you. Do not fear either the mouse running in your room like a woolly grey ball, the dog barking outside, the cow running to your side or the unknown shadow among the trees. Do not fear the present or the future. Above all, do not have any fear.*<sup>108</sup>

<sup>106</sup> BAETEMAN, 1958:36 - 58. My underline.

<sup>107</sup> My emphasis.

<sup>108</sup> *O Livro de Lézard*, 1st v.:56. Lézard goes on to ask the guides to think about the others, to renounce their desires; to work hard to be superior to their laziness, their negligence, their gluttony, their foolishness and desires. Then, after this "rude

The earlier religious manuals for young women used a bellicose vocabulary when speaking about temptations – one need to be courageous, use weapons, fight, struggle, in order to win the battle against the ‘wild beast’ inside us – evil and temptations. José Baeteman explains that there are differences between to feel and to consent and admonished his readers not to be perturbed by torments caused by imagination:

*‘What does the devil’s wrath prove except that your adversary has not yet won the battle! No one besieges an already defenceless city. One does not need to attack the rendered enemy ! Every defeat puts an end to the combat – and then the peace is but the bitter peace of those who have lost the battle’.*<sup>109</sup>

Heroism had to be cultivated by everyone since one did not need to be persecuted, or to have enemies to fight to show Christian heroism. The worst enemies are those who live inside ‘the heart and mind’ of any person. Therefore, the physical heroism stressed in the fairy-tales and in the novels for adolescents is metaphorical of this spiritual heroism.<sup>110</sup>

Temptation would not occur without propitious opportunities — that is places, behaviour, and forms of leisure that could induce a girl to transgress the norms ( they were called occasions of sin). Manuals strongly warned young woman to not become herself – naively or deliberately – in an “occasion for sin.” These literature were full of exhortations against immodesty in fashion and make up which could provoke ‘iniquitous thoughts’ in men leading them to sin. This evokes the ever present image of Eve and of her evil power vis a vis a weak men represented as driven-by-sex and powerless to resist seduction.<sup>111</sup>

More modern authors did not stress the dangers of temptation with Baeteman’s imprecision and ambiguities. These authors minimised the apocalyptic style of his utterances by emphasising the difference between sensation, temptations and actual sin. Monique Levallet-Montal prefers to caution her readers against Pharisaism (“these narrow spirits who regards everything as evil”), explaining that there were pure and legitimate sensations that were far from being sinful and that evil had a very different nature:

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discipline” year after year, “one will acquire an armour, a clothing made of steel on which temptation will break on.” MOHANA, 1960, also prescribes exercises to strengthen the will or as BOTAS, ( 1981:57) points out, “to refrain and tame the animal.”

<sup>109</sup> BAETEMAN, 1958:93.

<sup>110</sup> In the novels from the ‘*Coleção Menina e Moça*’ physical heroism is a virtue of the adolescent. It is the ‘ideal of real womanhood’<sup>110</sup> that emerges from these writings, as an ever-present alternative to the model of womanhood characterised by fragility, docility and frivolity.

<sup>111</sup> Such men are popularly referred as “*tem o sexo na cabeça*” literally to have sex in the mind. But it also plays with the double sense of the words evoking someone who has the sexual organ on the head. *However such accusation could popularly turn over the own authors of manuals. (They were actually the persons who saw sexual motivations and sin in everything).*

*How can one avoid the physical emotion when receiving a declaration of love, even the chaste one ? Or at the moment of the first kiss – although very pure – during the engagement..<sup>112</sup>*

For this author concern about girls' purity, could not be caricatured as innocence anymore. As she pointed out, "thirty years ago girls were kept in a kind of compulsory honesty, carefully watched by parents, relatives and housekeepers".<sup>113</sup> But the author believed that the situation in the 1950s was far better, since a girl could be virtuous through her own will, and not because she had been forced. She concludes:

*Our sons and daughters must know why they want to remain pure. You could say – but they have always known the reason : to obey God's commandments. Yes, it is true. But one obeys a law better by knowing the reasons for it. Passive obedience is excellent, but clever, rational and deliberate obedience is even better, because it is incomparably more 'contagious' than the other.<sup>114</sup>*

## *Sexual Education*

The discussion of sex education – an obligation of schools or a parental duty – became mandatory in the 1950s, even providing the theme for advertisements, which linked sexual education to modernity.<sup>115</sup> Consequently the Catholic Church had to take a position about the matter which was to be included in the high school syllabus.

The Church implacably opposed any attempt to 'naturalise' sex or vulgarise information about the issue, disapproving an exclusive 'scientific' treatment limited to biological aspects. Instead sex should be regarded in a broader context considering its spiritual aspects (called human in opposition to the other regarded as merely animal) and chiefly religious doctrine.

From the 1920s onwards technical manuals about child-care were published under strong opposition led by the Church and other traditional sectors of society. They aimed to convey 'correct information about sexuality,' addressing issues such as 'menstruation, sexual intercourse, pre-natal care and childbirth. Geraldo Pires de Sousa, the author of several

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<sup>112</sup> LEVALLET-MONTAL, 1955:98.

<sup>113</sup> LEVALLET-MONTAL, 1955:16.

<sup>114</sup> LEVALLET-MONTAL, 1955:93. The idea behind this is one of the principles of the youth movements of the *Ação Católica* ('Catholic Action') - to evangelise one's environment, just by the example of a positive Christian life. **See chapter 1.**

<sup>115</sup> See chapter 6.

religious manuals still re-edited in the 1950s, reproved the parents: “who seems to ignore what is going on in the schools, where the *'normalistas'* are indoctrinated about *puericultura*.”<sup>116</sup>

However, after almost thirty years of social pressure, the clergy had to adapt to the new times.<sup>117</sup> It was also a way of disciplining, in a religious way, an issue that could no longer be ignored.<sup>118</sup> From the lasting Catholic theological contempt of the body, there evolved the more positive idea that “the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and as such it must be respected.”<sup>119</sup> Religion, they said, should be a matter of do, and never of don't, of stressing the positive side rather than the prohibitions, emphasising that youngsters should look for the benefits that chastity would bring to them.

Sexual education should arise from intimate talks between a daughter/son and the parent of the same sex. In these chats information should be given gradually in accordance with the child's age and understanding. Previously, instructions about sexual matters came in a decisive talk – the “necessary enlightenment” given by the mother to the daughter “immediately before the inevitable moment, just before marriage” – an experience shared in different times and places.<sup>120</sup>

The intimate chatting between mother and daughter was regarded as part of modern motherhood and used as theme for advertisements.<sup>121</sup> However, it did not totally dismiss the atmosphere of silent conspiracy which surrounded the issue. Rachel Jardim remembers her adolescence:

*They asked Aunt Eugenia to minister some 'classes' to us. Eugenia, a spinster...looking like a nun with her mortified air...Sex was constant. Of the duties of the wife to her husband (Saint Paul)...of the importance of chastity*

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<sup>116</sup> *'Normalista'* was the name given to the students of the *'Curso Normal'*, that is the secondary course which prepared teachers for Primary School. In the 1950s it must have already seemed rather old-fashioned advice. Still, this book was republished several times during the decade. SOUSA, 1958:239.

<sup>117</sup> It was conventional wisdom that these were not issues for the knowledge of woman before marriage. A single girl must not be instructed in these matters, otherwise she would lose her innocence. It was represented as 'a stain which tarnished her brilliance, making her lose her grace.'

<sup>118</sup> The idea of discourse about sex as a powerful instrument of control was developed by Michel Foucault, in several of his works. See, among others, FOUCAULT, 1979; and also GIDDENS, 1993 for a different development of Foucault's idea about the social construction of sexuality.

<sup>119</sup> A step forward from the statements of the Fathers of the Church who preferred to remind the public that a woman's 'bodily beauty is nothing less than phlegm, blood, bile, rheum, and the fluid of digested food. See DALY, 1968; WARNER, 1985; ARMSTRONG, 1986.

<sup>120</sup> This quotation refers to Oscarian Sweden - a period which corresponds to the American and British Victorian age. FRYKMAN & LÖFGREN, 1987:227. Novelist Emy Carvalho Fonseca pictured the shame brought by such *'hesitant and forced talking'* which constituted an annoyance for both, daughter and mother. There was no intimacy between them to justify these explanations – to happen...just once in a lifetime, as a hard and enforced duty. CARVALHO DA FONSECA, *Jóia*:53.

<sup>121</sup> See chapter 6.

*(Saint Paul again)...It was the other side of sensuality, the voluptuousness of asceticism. Her classes were an education. I learned from what was not said<sup>122</sup>*

Persons who had been educated to find sex dirty, a concealed and unmentionable issue, would not speak about the issue with the required naturalness. Therefore, the Catholic publishing houses started to edit manuals of sexual education ensuring that the necessary information was carefully given without tainting their readers' modesty. Some manuals were destined to adolescents, where sex was treated in the broader context of Catholic doctrine about marriage, without detailed information about sexual life. The others were the *Manuals of Sexual Education* which gave more explicit information and were destined for the young man/woman already engaged to marry. For these young women, the Church also provided 'Courses of Preparation for Marriage.'

'Preparation for Marriage', was an euphemism for sexual education, which was administered with the same strong religious accent given to the books. Both were the counterpoint to the 'scientific' manuals, already well disseminated among the masculine public. But to attend these courses was indeed a sign of modernity, in spite of the circumlocutions and metaphors used. Rachel Jardim's description of her own experience epitomises the ambiguities which still involved the issue among more intellectual sectors of the Brazilian Catholic Church:

*I decided to attend a course, organised by one of the directors of Catholic Action. Its aim was to prepare women for marriage....The director was considered a kind of 'doctor of the Church' – a clean, spiritual, wax-like face with careful language and polite manners. Her accent was all daintiness and moral elevation. What they really wanted was to marry Christ himself. If this was not possible, they accepted a plain mortal.*

*The director was married; her husband was member of the Centro Dom Vital.<sup>123</sup> They lived 'in Christ,' the idea was to do everything 'in Christ'... They tried to speak freely about sex because it was a work of God. Of course, it was only invented in order to bring children to the world, but sin... no, it was not sin. The director confirmed 'there was not sin in sex. They should put a stop to this silly idea... only perversions could be considered sin.' My aunt had already told me about a perversion – intercourse in front of a mirror. They spoke about another one that day – intercourse in the tub during bath time...Then I asked if was sin to have sex without clothes (There was gossip in the town – about the director and her husband – that they used sheets specially made for the occasion<sup>124</sup>). She looked at me and calmly answered : Of course it is not sin, since the body is a work of God. Only you must be careful not leave it too exposed or in scandalous positions!...<sup>125</sup>*

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<sup>122</sup> JARDIM, 1973:8.

<sup>123</sup> For the *Centro D. Vital* see chapter 1

<sup>124</sup> Gilberto Freyre mentions that sheets used in Colonial Brazil had a carefully embroidered hole, to be used during intercourse.

<sup>125</sup> JARDIM, 1973:21.



Jardim's description pictured quite well the dilemmas and ambiguities faced by those who were in charge of spreading the new viewpoint of the Church, either in courses or writing manuals

## *Manuals for Engaged Girls*

Since the Church had endorsed the 'love between the spouses' as a legitimate end of marriage, the theological meaning of the sexual relationship had to be fully understood by the faithful. These books emphasised 'the spiritual dimension' of sex, or sex as the utmost manifestation of love. Real Love was the one praised in the '*Song of the Songs*' that has been interpreted either as representing the relationship between God and the soul, between God and the Virgin Mary or as a metaphor, for the divine relationship of God and 'His Church' — intrinsically, all of them are hierarchical relationships in its extreme limit.

Modern authors had to admit and teach the readers that sexual pleasure was a 'gift' given by God to humankind, rather than a sin as the faithful people had been compelled to believe for centuries. However, they were not quite sure about the limits between pleasure and sin, were cautious about the licit frequency of sexual relationships for the couple; and admitted that sexual abstinence was a pleasant sacrifice to God (few 'chosen' couples could even, in perfect accord, live a 'Joséphite marriage' in total chastity forever).<sup>126</sup>

Among the manuals about marriage which are analysed in this thesis, four books deal specifically with sexuality. German Dr Fritz Kahn was the author of the most popular 'scientific' manual destined for a masculine readership.<sup>127</sup> Notwithstanding its scientific purpose, there are few ideological differences between Kahn's writings and those by religious authors, chiefly in relation to the feminine role.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> It is believed that Saint Little Thérèse parents had made this vow at their wedding night. Nevertheless one year later they already had their first daughter, who would be followed by seven more. FURLONG, 1987. See also WARNER, 1985. From this point of view, contrary to what was commonly believed, chastity should be regarded as the virtue of marriage — only those who have the right to have a sexual life, could assume this virtue in its completeness, administering the licit use of sex and admitting that "continence was the best expression of love between a husband and wife. By contrast, what was demanded from single people, including nuns and priests, was virginity, and these words should not be taken as synonymous."

<sup>127</sup> It was an obligatory gift a father should give his adolescent son.

<sup>128</sup> Notwithstanding his starting point being sexual life as a biological imperative for both sexes, and considering that religious prescription of chastity was against biology. The contamination of science by the prejudices about woman has already been analysed. See for instance SCULLY & BART, 1973; MARTIN, 1989, 1991.

The first religious book was written by a doctor and his daughter – Dr. Carnot and Edith Carnot – and was the feminine version of a previous manual destined for men. It was presented as “a clean, clear and decent book,”<sup>129</sup> and contained in its foreword the exhortation:

*Damsels! Hear me! You must know thoroughly your precious and delicate organism wisely made by the Creator, for the accomplishment of your divine mission.*<sup>130</sup>

The women's manual<sup>131</sup> starts with a discussion about love including pregnancy and parturition; then female and male physiology, human reproduction and venereal disease. This issue, in the women's manual was preceded by the words :

*Probably this chapter will be of no interest for you: do leave it out. Moreover, if you have well understood the former chapters of this book, you will be protected from these miseries, and there will be no use in knowing the meaning of words such as 'gonococcus' or 'treponema.'*<sup>132</sup>

In the third part the authors contrast divorce — ‘the enemy of love’ — with the family, considered to be ‘at love's service.’ There is no information about birth control, not even about the ‘Ogino Knaus method’ – the only one accepted by the Church. Comparing the contents of both manuals, and the order in which the issues are treated in each one reveals much about the stereotypes about gender roles implicit in them.

M.Madalena Ribeiro de Oliveira lectured and wrote about sexual education for a Catholic newspaper.<sup>133</sup> It is easy to perceive Kahn's word behind her metaphorical utterances – presented as chats between a mother and daughter –<sup>134</sup> However, she also inserts ‘human love’ and sexuality into the broader context of the Catholic doctrine about (so-called) ‘God's plan for human salvation’, introducing to a broader public a terminology restricted to the more intellectual Catholics. She speaks about human love [sex] always in two contexts – before and after the ‘*Parusia*’, that is ‘God's reign at the end of time.’ Even so, she also follows the same pattern of the other authors' books, considering three main themes – love, sexual life ( with a detailed description of intercourse) and the re-affirmation of the doctrine against birth control and divorce.

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<sup>129</sup> The masculine edition was introduced as a “*decent, clear, judicious and scientific book.*” CARNOT, [1956].

<sup>130</sup> CARNOT, 1960:6.

<sup>131</sup> It is worth comparing the contents of these books. The men's edition starts with ‘ human reproduction, including venereal diseases, and the advantages for single men of remaining chaste. The second part deals with love, the choice of a bride, and the enemies of love – pomography, birth control and divorce; and in the last part the author explains the basis of the Ogino Knauss method.

<sup>132</sup> CARNOT, 1960:178.

<sup>133</sup> JARDIM, 1973:54-55

<sup>134</sup> There are some evidences that she is the lecturer of the course described by JARDIM, 1973.

The third author was the doctor and priest João Mohana, whose book for a male readership – *Vida Sexual para Solteiros e Casados* – was intended to be a religious counterpoint to Kahn's work. For Carlos Winckler, Mohana's book introduced the 'physiological dictatorship,' by putting the stress on 'the equilibrium of the glands.' For instance, when describing the consequences of a caress on the nipples of a virgin, Mohana warns that, after 'the vertiginous waves which assault her through her breast, towards the heart, the head, the entrails, the whole body," it provokes the liberation of a hormone, and asks

*What will happen when the hormone reaches the mammary glands and find it still immature? Will it get out by the nipples as milk ? I wish it would! Instead it will remain circulating in the body, up and down, as running gunpowder. So you can evaluate the glandular pandemonium it provokes in the girl's organic structure: No more she will be a girl, nor a woman yet, but a human disorder!*<sup>135</sup>

Mohana takes the theological idea of God's Mystical Body – that is the community of the faithful and God – as a powerful argument against 'the bad use of sex: ' stressing that the individual's sin affects the whole Body and 'forces' God's complicity in the act.<sup>136</sup>

## *Gender Differences*

It is conventional wisdom that, man is driven by sex; for the adult it is physiologically imperative, and almost uncontrolled. His sexual needs are indisputable, he is naturally polygamous, and prolonged sexual abstinence can bring him health disturbances.<sup>137</sup> Fritz Kahn puts it in more scientific terms :

*Man is driven by his sexual instinct to search for a woman in order to introduce into her his sexual cells. Consequently, his sexual instinct explosively erupts when his sexual glands are saturated, leading him to consummate the sexual act... Men are not bad; they are what Nature made them to be in order to*

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<sup>135</sup> WINCKLER, 1983:59. The quotation refers to MOHANA, 1960:176. Similarly Mohana describes what happens to the young men after a Sunday at Copacabana beach: "You will come back apparently calm, but sexually excited - with instigated glands and provoked entrails. And what about the group coming back in a car still dressed in shorts - which have become fashionable nowadays? How could you prevent 'bubbling with' excitement? Maybe nothing happens at that moment, or that afternoon. But for sure something will happen in the night: before or after the movies, when the neck of the bottle overflows and the cork jumps up. Haven't you seen on the screen the aesthetically commercial representation of the things you wanted to do at the beach and haven't done? Perhaps you can put up to me: "But I can't get rid of the explosion because either the cork would jump up or the bottle will explode." MOHANA, 1960:144.

<sup>136</sup> MOHANA, 1960:85. For the analysis of Mohana's manual and its [negative] influence on the Catholic activists of today, see BOTAS, 1981.

<sup>137</sup> For Renee Hirschon, who described an analogous situation in Greece, the possible explanation '*comes from observation of physiological processes specific to men, such as involuntary erection and nocturnal emissions*'. HIRSCHON, 1978:67.

*accomplish his role. Once he has emitted his cells he goes away, as foreseen by Nature.*<sup>138</sup>

Thus, sex for man is divorced from romantic love, and he is naturally polygamous. The authors of religious didactic literature thoroughly rejected this idea. For them although physically man could be sexually more active, having more needs than woman, God also give him the faculty of educating his will to surpass nature. For João Mohana who wrote for men, humankind has two – and not only one – nervous systems (“what they taught you, at school, is not the truth”<sup>139</sup>): one is involuntary, unruly and does not obey our wills (it is responsible for the physical working of the body). The other nervous system is voluntary and ruled by our wills and commands: therefore one does just what one wants to retain the command of actions. This included sexuality. For João Mohana man is not driven to sex by nature, but rather by an ‘environment saturated with sex appeals.’ And for him “60% of one’s personality is provided by the stimulus of the social environment, and the same can be said of one’s sexuality.”<sup>140</sup> It is implicit that although sex for man is an animal instinct, it can be humanised through woman’s attitudes. By contrast, sex for woman is a whole issue, because for her it is only the necessary step toward motherhood.

### *The Myth of the ‘First Night’*

In the context of the valorisation of chastity for single girls, it is hardly surprising that the first night of marriage, understood as the woman’s initiation in her sexual life, assumed a pivotal position in the writings about sexual life. These narratives can be read as a myth in the sense that they epitomise representations and values about gender roles and sexuality as lived in the Brazilian 1950s.

The first night can be analysed as a ritual either in its formal aspects or in Catholic doctrine itself: according to Thomas Aquinas, the ‘first night’ is an intrinsic part of the Sacrament of marriage. As the doctrine states, because the couple are the actual ministers and the priest a mere witness’, the first intercourse could be considered as the moment when the Sacrament reached culmination.<sup>141</sup> The first night was also lived as a ritual in the sense that it summarise for the couple what was supposed to be their roles in conjugal life thereafter. ‘The first night’ was thought as crucial for the future happiness of the couple, only achieved by overcoming of

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<sup>138</sup> KAHN, 1947:45

<sup>139</sup> MOHANA, 1960:141 - 145.

<sup>140</sup> He calls those environments of ‘copacabanas’ (‘MOHANA, 1960:141). See chapter 1.

<sup>141</sup> See TÓTH [nd]; GENEVOIS, 1959; RIBEIRO DE OLIVEIRA [nd]; NEGROMONTE, 1961. Actually it was a secondary part, since sexual life could be renounced by mutual consent.

the 'natural' psychological characteristics of sex. Authors questioned their social gender role by stressing the problems inherent in the meeting of a virgin supposedly ignorant, and a man accustomed to meet whores, unused to restraining his instincts. Finally, its ritualised character was emphasised by the extreme valorisation of the so-called '*Camisola do Dia*' that is the night-gown for the wedding day, part of the mysteries and anxieties which preceded the first night of marriage. This night-gown should be white, and preferably made of precious fabric and lace, richly embroidered.<sup>142</sup>

In spite of the Catholic prohibition of sex out of wedlock for both sexes, it was expected that a man should be experienced to be the master, to command, 'to take the reins.'<sup>143</sup> Religious manuals still preached the contrary but it remains open to doubt whether it was taken seriously by the majority of the public. This fact is attested since authors seemed to speak for experienced men who were able to face not a prostitute but a virginal maiden.

*On the nuptial night man is for woman more than her beloved partner, more than her bridegroom: he is the emissary of masculinity who comes to the bride to transform her from maid into woman, through his virility. It falls to him to represent what the masculine sex is for a feminine soul.*<sup>144</sup>

The need to accommodate traditional notions of mystery, secrecy and contempt in respect of sex with the modern belief that it was natural is revealed in the reservations contained in the advice. The author recommends the reader, that "he must come to her tactfully and with decency..."<sup>145</sup> "they must act with discretion and respect...she must submit herself with a attitude of perfect and spiritual confidence..."<sup>146</sup> João Mohana repeatedly connotes the ideal male attitude with charity ("man should act in a charitable way; 'in the name of charity he must..." "combine wisely and charitably your caress with.... "). Although he speaks about the theological virtue of charity,<sup>147</sup> his discourse had a strange popular connotation — charity

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<sup>142</sup> It is important to add that night-gowns were an outstanding element in the girl's imagination about marriage, and consequently in the huge trousseau each middle-class girl started to elaborate prior to her engagement - at that time it was common for the mother to have it started since her early childhood. There were specialists in bridal lingerie, and the more fashionable ones worked exclusively with foreign material. The trousseau was indeed a symbol of status evaluated according to the exaggerated number and variety of pieces, the quality of the fabrics and hand-made embroidering.

<sup>143</sup> To be taken by an elder brother or relative to a brothel for the first time was the traditional rite of passage for adolescent boys, usually followed by the gift of the front door key, symbolising the freedom that a man should have. As a matter of respect fathers should ignore the fact. According to a personal communication, at the turn of the decade, fathers started to assume the role former attributed to brothers, as a sign of modernity.

<sup>144</sup> KAHN, 1947:69.

<sup>145</sup> RIBEIRO DE OLIVEIRA: 117

<sup>146</sup> *ibid.*:202

<sup>147</sup> MOHANA, 1960,:203, 209. The theological meaning of conjugal charity is found in another author: "Conjugal charity means looking at, loving and respecting the spouse because of all his/her qualities - including the 'natural' one that is his/her body- as a reflex and image of the goodness of God, as the work of His grace, as the temple of Trinity who inhabits the soul

denotes the patronising or forcible attitude that a person takes towards the ignorant, the sick, the poor, the imbecile. It was not an adjective usually found in texts about love or sex.

Ribeiro de Oliveira's description about 'the first night' intends to combine a free description of intercourse with the metaphorical interpretation of the *Song of Songs*. She is worried that the unknown could be a source of anxieties and explains the minutest detail for her readers:

*For the conjugal union to be perfect, woman must keep her muscles relaxed. This is comparable to her spiritual attitude of confidence and perfect abandonment in the hands of the one who represents for her Jesus Christ on earth.*<sup>148</sup>

Her metaphors for woman's anatomy follows the same pattern :

*"the vagina is the first door for the Sanctuary of feminine intimacy, which is also the Sanctuary of Maternity..."*<sup>149</sup> *"several glands, near the vagina, are in the charge of drizzling the gates of the Sanctuary of Maternity, to prepare it for the intromission of the virile organ bringing in the germs of life . "*

But she is not the only one to use religion to underline analogies and metaphors: paradoxically Kahn himself did the same, in spite of his 'scientific' discourse. For instance, he complained that by ignorance women could panic by thinking of the sufferings caused by defloration. To tranquillise his women readers, with the power of science behind his utterances, he emphasised that everything is bearable in the name of love:

*"For having faith, Saint Agathe could laugh whilst the Roman soldiers lacerated her breasts with burning tongs."*<sup>150</sup>

Kahn's analogy is more impressive because these early martyrs have endured such pains in defence of their virginity. These fantasies about the mortification of the flesh tantalised adolescent fantasies about sexuality, since it combines several elements of the religious imaginary. First the conception of virginity as a source of strength, a recurrent theme in all the legends of martyrs saints.<sup>151</sup> Virginity and martyrdom became complementary ideas with the physical subjection of the body to pains and ordeals. Authors have stressed that these legends about the martyrdom of woman at the early times of Christianity contained a sick erotic accent with elements of sado-masochistic violence — woman is always the passive victim whose

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and sanctifies the self. Therefore, under the light of Faith, irrevocably one will be able in discerning in the spouse something of Christ, thus being able of loving the other as part of Christ, and with the same love which links our soul to Christ." Edmond Boissard, *Questions Theologiques sur le Mariage*, quoted by RIBEIRO DE OLIVEIRA:136.

<sup>148</sup> RIBEIRO DE OLIVEIRA: 118.

<sup>149</sup> RIBEIRO DE OLIVEIRA: 118.

<sup>150</sup> KAHN, 1947:68.

<sup>151</sup> It persisted as far as the twentieth century, as in the story of Saint Maria Goretti. See chapter 2 of this theses

strength is present in her endurance of excruciating pain.<sup>152</sup> Moreover Marina Warner stresses that on these stories

*'the particular focus on women's torn and broken flesh... and the tortures that pile one upon the other with pornographic repetitiousness underline the identification of the female with the perils of sexual contact.'*<sup>153</sup>

Likewise, contemplative nuns were encouraged 'to fantasise erotically about Jesus'. In the account of the lives of Rosa de Lima and Margarida de Alacocque,<sup>154</sup> Jesus is a pathological sentimental jealous lover who treated them with "loving violence" and to whom they kept a rather masochist relationship:

*"Let do my pleasure [...] Now I want you to be the plaything of my love and you must live this without resistance, surrendered to my desires, allowing me to gratify myself at your expense."*<sup>155</sup>

Surpreendently these were reported as Jesus' words to Saint Margarida de Alacocque. Thus fantasies linked to penance are an important part of the ideal of female holiness, and the connection between love and suffering, pleasure and pain had enduring consequences for the Catholic women's lives as these texts of sexual education demonstrate.

It is a recurrent ideal – ancient legends using erotic images, followed several centuries by, 'scientific' discourse re-appropriating these old legends in analogy to sexuality. An author warns woman "that pain is bravely endured when... woman understands that it is by the sacrifice, readily accepted that she can make evident her esteem for her beloved."<sup>156</sup> These ideas were firmly embodied by women who pictured themselves as victims suffering physical pain in the name of love either in intercourse or in delivery:

*The circumstances by which a maiden is converted into woman are similar to the one which transforms a woman into a mother. A girl must be kindly prepared by her husband to face both with heroism. Parents and educators must help young woman to put in concrete terms her otherwise 'vapid pink dreams' of love. She must learn to fix her future in the pillars of an ideal which is based in the humbler and deeper reality: the reality of the cross; of the sacrifice freely accepted and happily lived out in the name of love.*<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> By contrast with legends about male martyrs which emphasise heroism and bravery.

<sup>153</sup> WARNER, 1985:71

<sup>154</sup> Saint Margarida de Alacocque is well known in Brazil for introducing the popular devotion known as 'the enthronement of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus' in Catholic homes, a ritual which must be renewed on each anniversary of that ceremony. This picture sometimes displays the figure of the Sacred Heart of Mary as well. Both images are extremely popular in Brazil, but are usually found on the walls of lower class houses. See footnote 46 in chapter 3 of this thesis.

<sup>155</sup> ARMSTRONG, 1986:154.

<sup>156</sup> CARNOT, 1960:131

<sup>157</sup> RIBEIRO DE OLIVEIRA, 198. Compare it with this Victorian quotation - "a woman's highest duty is so often to suffer and be still." (quoted by ROBERTS, 1977:556.)

The language of the manuals certainly reinforced this victimisation of woman in the representations of gender roles. Man takes the command, he is the hunter, the chief, the master, he represents force, vigour, authority. Men denote wantonness, impetuosity, action. Woman is the prey, the disciple, the commanded. She represents passivity, modesty, innocence.<sup>158</sup> And in theological discourse, man represented Jesus Christ and woman the Church, this guaranteed the hierarchical relationship of submissiveness and passivity. She is the one who must obey, receive, and attend:

*'He must awake his rebel bride for the joys of sex'*<sup>159</sup>

*Sometimes man must show some authority at the painful moment of defloration.*<sup>160</sup>

*Once her psychological barriers had been surpassed, with the cunning of the hunter, he can end with virile energy the work he had been delicately undertaking until then.*<sup>161</sup>

The characteristics of each sex should be surpassed in order to achieve the harmony on the 'first night.' Man should be controlled, since he is driven by instincts; culturally he is expected to demonstrate his virility, to show himself as sexually insatiable.<sup>162</sup> Fritz Kahn more implores man to act tactfully on such an occasion ("Man should not hasten over her like a bird of prey"<sup>163</sup>). Kahn pictured in dark colours the possible consequences of the lack of tact of unadvised husbands, under titles such as "From the nuptial bed to suicide" and "From the nuptial bed to madhouse." To avoid these terrible consequences his counsels vary between a romantic and a compassionate language, in spite of his supposed 'scientific' approach. He advises his readers that

*Love-games are like a music that physically and spiritually must begin in "pianissimo" and only gradually reach the "furioso" of sensual passion. A light touch with the finger-tips like playing of the harp, a sigh of warm breath as a breeze over the flowers; a quick passing of the hands on her eyebrows, like a*

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<sup>158</sup> "Man is aggressive and the woman receptive; man is violent and the woman, meek and mild. Satisfaction is obtained intensively by man and extensively by woman; man take the whole and woman go into details; man is more rational and woman more affectionate; man easily forgets, woman keeps easily things in mind; woman is more susceptible [to little offences] whilst man forgives more easily, etc.' MOHANA, 1960:187 - 188.

<sup>159</sup> CARNOT, 1960:131.

<sup>160</sup> RIBEIRO DE OLIVEIRA:197.

<sup>161</sup> KAHN, 1947:75

<sup>162</sup> For Kahn rather than being a cultural matter this is part of masculine essence ( *Men are not bad; they are what Nature made them to be*) He also states that feminine sexual sensibility is more spiritual than man's. "Man is like a centaur, composed by two halves- below an animal and above a semi-god; whilst woman is an unity - the propagator of the specie." KAHN, 1947:45.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*:73.



*caress on the fur of a luxury pet, a love word whispered in her ears – these are the gestures to which this delicate instrument – the feminine soul, could tune.*<sup>164</sup>

Ribeiro de Oliveira and Fritz Kahn used similar metaphors to speak about women's 'natural' modesty<sup>165</sup> and its effect on man. For Ribeiro de Oliveira, "this barrier stops his vigorous attack, keeps his arms tied, silences his mouth, cools his eyes, restrains his ardour, and withholds his idle dreams."<sup>166</sup> For Kahn

*the real man is not mystified by woman's reservation, then stopping his tracks. However man measures woman's value by the degree of resistance imposed over him." This will transform what was just physical desire, into respect for her integrity, transfiguring his primitive erotic attitude into a thoroughly humanised relationship.*<sup>167</sup>

Nevertheless he recommended that "the husband should come to the bride as if she were his sister and his love should resemble the compassion of the surgeon who comes to alleviate a suffering."<sup>168</sup> On her turn, Edith Carnot warns her feminine readership that "woman should answer to that 'masculine agitation' by showing him a motherly attitude, as he were but an unquiet child."<sup>169</sup> It is worth quoting at length this example, since it sums up the expectations about gender roles in marriage, as they have been analysed here.

*She must not try to arouse her husband sexually – it could even hurt his feelings about his virility (thus she must reward his caress on a more spiritual plane). By contrast, his cuddling has the purpose of physically awaking her for sex. Woman must help him with her good will in being physically awake. She must understand that God – who is Substantial and Eternal Love – profoundly humiliated Himself by his incarnation, thus giving testimony in his flesh of his deep love for humankind. In the same way, the wife's love [for her husband] must be confirmed by the "fleshy love" which is the incarnation of her love; and this happens during intercourse.*<sup>170</sup>

Implicit is the idea that sex could mean a humiliation for woman,<sup>171</sup> since her body should be kept entirely at her husband's disposal. In spite of the religious discourse about equal rights over the other's body in marriage, woman must be restrained by the gender

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<sup>164</sup> Ibid.: 54

<sup>165</sup> A barrier [Ribeiro de Oliveira], a fence [Kahn].

<sup>166</sup> R. Oliveira : 118/119.

<sup>167</sup> Kahn.: 46.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.:73

<sup>169</sup> CARNOT, 1960:127.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid: 207. see also KAHN, 1947:57.

<sup>171</sup> By contrast, Edith Carnot tells her readership that "in the young men's sexual education, it is important to insist on the legitimate male haughtiness since his is the creator role." CARNOT, 1960:92.

representations about what a man's role was and what the behaviour of 'good girls' should be. Ribeiro de Oliveira admits that

*The good wife derives her pleasure from giving pleasure to her husband and from accomplishing her conjugal duty. Several times this will be the only one pleasure she will have, and being involved in it will be her ultimate reward.*<sup>172</sup>

Oliveira's opinion is not surprising since it represents the confluence of two representations widely spread – woman as the altercentred subject;<sup>173</sup> and woman as the passionless being.<sup>174</sup>

However, albeit the image of the sexless female, some authors, such as father and daughter Carnot, are aware that women could 'enjoy sex' and became insatiable. They concede that it might be normal in the first year of marriage, but warn their readers about the damages it could bring to health, not only theirs, but the dangers of having weak offspring – a consequence from sparing man's vital source. Thus, although they did not overtly censure it, in picturing the possible harm to the family's well being, the message is made clear.

Therefore, irrespective of the accent of the prescriptive literature – either 'scientific' or religious – authors are in perfect accord with representations and expectation about gender roles in relation to sex.

## • *Conclusion*

The contradiction or weakness of the reasoning of the normative literature lies in its ambiguity. On the one hand, the authors claim to be against mainstream society, by condemning the 'modern way of life' in every aspect. They even boast that they are independent of or apart from public opinion. They frequently evoke the eternity of their beliefs to prove that the Church does not need to make any changes to attract anybody. On the other hand these authors used public opinion or common sense as the main point for their considerations. At the same time as they intended to raise new opinions, changing 'old' mentalities, they reinforced all their cultural prejudices when these prejudices provided the arguments they needed. They urged their readers to be apart from the mainstream without losing its cultural conditioning.

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<sup>172</sup> RIBEIRO DE OLIVEIRA:205.

<sup>173</sup> See chapter 9.

<sup>174</sup> This is similar to the Victorian ideal of female innocence which was still very much present in the discourse of the religious manuals in the 1950s. For the theme of female innocence see, for instance, COTT, 1977. COMINOS, 1978. Several authors question the Victorian sexless women, saying that it represented a mere ideal, as the medical writings reveal. See, for instance, DEGLER, 1974.

These manuals also provided the religious pedagogical viewpoint about sexuality and gender roles, where are striking both ideas of associating love and pain, and sacrifice regarded as proof of love. Actually these Christian legacies are deeply embodied in our social imaginary. They can be found not only in the accounts of saints always held up as the best examples for a girl's behaviour, but it is also the essence of Mary, the symbol of perfect Christian womanhood. It is also present in ancient fairy tales and in modern romantic novels, and constituted the fabric of feminine fantasies of sexual life.

## Chapter 5

### *Prescriptions, Desires and Fantasies*

#### *The Universe Disclosed by Romantic Novels*

In an ambience which intended to be de-sexualised, Brazilian adolescent women also read European novels written by Victorian and Edwardian authors. These novels stressed the same message as the religious manuals in a fictional environment which filled the reader 's imagination with romantic fantasy. Reading behind the lines, or searching for clues, they were tantalised by the metaphors, suggestive vocabulary and absurd plots.

Adolescent fantasies of a republican tropical country - an exotic place for the writers - were peopled with the signs of an European aristocratic past and exotic flowers, plants and landscapes which each one could imbue with their particular forms, colours and smells. They also assimilated European exotic fantasies and prejudices about foreign places and people including tropical South America — as one of the inhospitable places where no one could safely take a wife or a child.

These books were extremely popular up and including the 1950s. Among the novels no one surpassed the popularity of those written by the French author M.Delly, known for 'sugary' plots. This genre of literature is popularly called either 'sugar- water novels' or even 'M. Delly's- type of books.'<sup>1</sup> Proof of their popularity are the successive editions of some of M.Delly's novels. In 1958 the figures were: '*Escrava ou Rainha*' [Eclave ou Reine] with 17 editions; *Entre Duas Almas* [ Entre Deux Ames] 15 editions; the 2 volumes: *Elfrida* and *O Rei de Kidji* [Le Roi du Kidji] 8 editions; *Meu Vestido Cor do Céu* [Ma Robe Couleur du Temps] 6 editions. It is important to stress that many of them had already had previous editions in other collections and they were also largely imported by the convents being also read in French or in Portuguese editions.

There are two major trends in the romantic novels read by Brazilian adolescent women in the 1950s: the first is the reaffirmation of Christian values in the construction of a

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<sup>1</sup> Literal translation of '*romances agua-com-acucar.*' or '*livros do tipo de M.Delly.*'

lady-like woman's role. The second trend was romantic love in its various manifestations. M. Delly's books make a bridge between the two tendencies..<sup>2</sup>

### *The Reinforcement of Christian Values*

The transition from the children's universe of fairy tales to a young lady's romantic novels, was not abrupt. The first novels retained many of the features of that universe of wonder and fantasy.

First, girls up to ten read the Countess of Segur's books and from ten to thirteen, those of the *Coleção Menina e Moça*, the Brazilian translation of the French '*La Bibliothèque de Suzette*' which were followed by the books of M. M. Delly. They had a strong moralist tone, and continued to play the important role of providing lessons and examples for girls who were still in education. Their messages stressed Christian virtues, will power, heroism, motherly virtues and they taught lessons of lady-like behaviour.

Their message is synthesised in a poem which metaphorically presents a woman's programme for a life style of self-denial centred on others:

*Be kind. Among the kinder, be the kindest, because feminine kindness is like the perfume of flowers. Resign yourself to your fate: the blossoming rose trees flower only in spring and have thorns for the whole year.*<sup>3</sup>

Flowers and thorns are popular metaphors for joys and happiness and sorrows and pain respectively. By choosing the image of the rose tree, the poet is stressing the popular idea that 'a woman can never be fully happy, there is always a hint of worries and fears to shade her joy, chiefly after motherhood' (the rose tree has thorns even when flowering).<sup>4</sup> And that is a direct consequence of being attached body and soul to children it is expected of a mother's role.

### *Motherhood*

The exaltation of motherhood characterises the books of the *Coleção Menina e Moça* although the pattern of the absent mother<sup>5</sup> prevails either by death,<sup>6</sup> prolonged travel

<sup>2</sup> After the first quotation, novels will be referred only by the Brazilian title.

<sup>3</sup> Vicente de Carvalho, '*Menina e Moça*'. This poem was the preface of the *Coleção Menina e Moça* books.

<sup>4</sup> According to '*A Família Cristã*,' a traditional Catholic magazine: "the feminine ideal and woman's natural destiny - strangeness in relation to the world, perennial sufferings and renunciation - is delineated through feminine virtues such as purity, kindness, patience and abnegation." (my emphasis) PRANDI, 1975: 30.

<sup>5</sup> This is another feature that those novels shared with fairy tales. Generally, children are reared by perverse stepmothers, and their fathers if still alive, are totally dominated by the wives, feeling impotent to help their offspring. See WARNER, 1991.

<sup>6</sup> Claude Saint Ogan *O Segredo do Velho Martin* [Les Deux Françaises]

to distant places,<sup>7</sup> or even a sudden loss of fortune.<sup>8</sup> The adventure, loss of status or dangers which the heroine endures result from the mother's absence.<sup>9</sup> The absent mother of these novels stressed the importance of maternal care, and reinforced the ideology about motherly love.<sup>10</sup>

In these novels the mother is a romanticised figure who cares (even from heaven) for her children. She protects, educates and forms their character: "Nature give us raw diamonds... They need caring and skilled hands to be refined. Children are what their mother made of them."<sup>11</sup> Her care leaves an indisputable mark on the lesser things in a child's daily life.<sup>12</sup> Heroine's mothers are always perfect beings since being dead or quite far in distant places, they have no imperfections, nothing worthy of blame. Thus, in the best tradition of fairy tales, mother's defects are embodied in the stepmother or in the mother-in-law.

The exaltation of motherly virtues has the intrinsic objective of enhancing the qualities of good children. In name of that distant mother – in heaven or distant places – children show their obedience, patience, gratitude and care to their foster parents.

The pattern of the heroine's absent mother has opposite meaning in M. Delly's books. Here, mothers are weak – physically and spiritually – one is the consequence of the other and this is the reason for their early death. Generally, they had left their aristocratic or wealthy bourgeois families because of a misalliance – the marriage to an artist – proof of their spiritual weakness. In consequence they had to live a poor life, distant from their relatives.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, in their widowhood they loose their meagre possessions for lack of will power or intelligence – a consequence of their spiritual weakness. Very poor and with a precarious health<sup>14</sup> there is no other way for them but to ask for help from their rich and

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<sup>7</sup> Margueritte Bourcet *A Herdeira de Ferlac* [L'Héritière de Ferlac]; Mario Donal *O Quarto Misterioso* [Rirette de Bois]

<sup>8</sup> Claude Saint Ogan *A Fugitiva* [Fugitive]

<sup>9</sup> *A Herdeira de Ferlac*; Margueirte Bourcet, *Canção de Outrora* [Le Romance d'Autrefois], *A Fugitiva*

<sup>10</sup> Although there is no information about the French authors from 'La Bibliothèque de Suzette' one can assume that they recounted historical customs which, even no longer practised were still remembered, at the time these authors were writing. As historians have shown, the attachment of parents to their offspring was not a natural or universal phenomenon, and for long children were not the first and most important thing to be taken into consideration by the parents. See BADINTER, 1985; ARIÉS, 1978. This does not mean that Brazilian middle-class girls decoded the plot of the novels as historical accounts of bygone habits, but they were 'translated' into or confronted with their own experience.

<sup>11</sup> *As Férias de Marionette* [Les Vacances de Guignolette]: 179

<sup>12</sup> For instance, an orphan could wear a beautiful and expensive dress, but everyone perceived that "it was not a choice made by a caring mother's hand." *A Canção de Outrora*, *A Princesa de Neve* [Princesse de Neige].

<sup>13</sup> For instance, *A Casa dos Rouxinóis* [La Maison des Rossignols.], *Magali*, In *Mitzi* [Mitzi] there is an inversion of the pattern. Here it is the hero's uncle who marries a Rumanian dancer and they will be the parents of the heroine. Her parents are already dead at the beginning of the story.

<sup>14</sup> In M. Delly's novels, it is not clear if lack of will power and determination is consequence of poor health, or if they are in any way associated because both are always combined. Artists portrayed as morally weak are often disabled as well.

proud relatives. So, early in the story they are sheltered by relatives, the heroine's mother dies and daughters must live in humiliating conditions.

In this case the portrayal of the weakness of mothers underlines the force of character of the heroine. There is an inversion of roles: despite being a child, it is the heroine who assumes responsibility for caring for the family. [Physically and/or morally] weak mothers are not able to look after their lives or families.

Indirectly, there is a condemnation of romantic love, when it is divorced from other needs such as a stable financial condition, and firm moral and religious principles. The lesson about the high price one pays for moments of happiness, when moved only by sentiments removed from social or moral relevance is quite clear.<sup>15</sup> Of course, the heroine never repeats her parents' pattern of marriage: she never falls in love with artists<sup>16</sup> and the possibility of marrying people of lower classes is never illustrated.<sup>17</sup>

The hero can easily fall in love with a poor virtuous heroine, because she has a high moral capital, thus, in a way it makes them equals. Moreover, poor virtuous heroines are always members of impoverished aristocracy, hence the hypogamic alliance only relates to money, never to social class.<sup>18</sup> The same could not be said about a rich virtuous heroine falling in love with a poor man, since he would be in total disadvantage in relation to her, who doubles the capital (virtue and money) required. Heroines always favour men who could be guides, masters and protectors;<sup>19</sup> The fact that they are always handsome, rich and powerful is depicted as mere coincidence.

Motherly virtues depend on their commitment to the ideal of domesticity.<sup>20</sup> Thus, worldly-minded mothers - interested in fashion and all sort of pleasures - are also despised.

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<sup>15</sup> This echoes the lessons of manuals. See 'True love' — chapter 4 of this thesis.

<sup>16</sup> In *A Casa dos Rouxinóis* (p.139) the heroine is incisive in refusing to marry a relative and close friend because he is a singer; in accordance with the stereotype of artists in these novels he is a dreamer, a dissipated person who lives only the present without saving for the future. The artist also declares his expectation of catching her strength and will in order to change his character. That is, he sees in the heroine a future guide and source of inspiration - an inversion of the hierarchical pattern of marital relationship.

<sup>17</sup> This fact is easily understood in the framework of the complex of honour and shame, and the different types of capital which man and woman are supposed to administer – man administers economic capital and his honour is linked to the sphere of business, whilst woman's main capital is her honour, her spiritual and moral virtues. See chapter 2 of this thesis.

<sup>18</sup> In *Magaly* [Magaly], the heroine has an unknown origin, in *Mitzi* the impediments are associated to her mother's reputation and the suspicions that she could be a bastard child. In both cases the truth is revealed, re-establishing the social order once threatened by the hero's disposition in marrying the heroine at any price. For an analysis of hypogamic alliances among Brazilian middle classes see ABREU, 1980. As a counterpoint to his examples see OLIVEIRA SILVA, 1985:53-55.

<sup>19</sup> From *Meu Vestido Cor do Céu* [Ma Robe Couleur du Temps]:78 - "A husband must be different from it [a gentle companionship]. I'd like that my husband were a very good friend, tender, judicious and stronger than me, to become my confidant and my counsellor." This example is taken at random. Any one of M. Delly's books would provide similar quotation.

<sup>20</sup> *A Fugitiva*, *As Férias de Marionette*

Home and the public sphere are diametrically opposed poles, thus mothers attached to the world outside home always bring harm to children.<sup>21</sup>

Besides there are environments, such as big cities, which in themselves predispose women to shirk their duties. Virtue is naturally achieved only in countryside.<sup>22</sup> There were suspicions that people from large cities were “vain, prodigal people, who wanted to go to the theatre every day, demanded new dresses every week and sweetmeats every time.”<sup>23</sup>

These points call attention to the conservative character of these novels: the reinforcement of the traditional women’s role, of the hierarchical pattern of the relationship between husband and wife, and between parents and children. Urban centres and manifestations of ‘modern times’ or of ‘modern civilisation’ are condemned.

### *Parent's Projects of Upward Mobility*

Parental aspirations are also strongly condemned in these novels. Parents want the best for their children and become blind in relation to the possible consequences or the suitability (otherwise) of their projects. This also can lead them to extreme acquiescence to the daughter’s moral lassitude or lack of character.<sup>24</sup>

This kind of parental love leads the parents to commit serious offences such as kidnapping or child-swapping, in order that their own daughter ascends towards a better social position.<sup>25</sup> However, authors are keen to explain how they never succeed, when usurping their fostered child’s social position. It does not matter if the aristocratic child is reared in a humble environment because ‘her natural elegance’, ‘the delicacy of her figure’ or ‘the “natural” politeness of her manners’ will surface in spite of the dirty rags she wears. By contrast, the poor girl who had usurped her place, will reveal her origin by the vulgarity of her taste,<sup>26</sup> the roughness of her figure<sup>27</sup> or by a lack of delicacy or sensibility.

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<sup>21</sup> Commonly these [rich] children have everything but parental love, and this lack makes them weak and ill, in the end they die from lack of love, as in M. Delly, *Entre Duas Imas* [Entre Deux Ames]. *A Vingança de Ralph* [La Vengeance de Ralph].

<sup>22</sup> The Rural Idyll, that is the romanticised vision of the countryside as the place of virtues, and in result identified with (the ideal) home was analysed by DAVIDOFF, L'ESPERANCE & NEWBY, 1976, MORIN, 1977. This reasoning was still present in 1950s reports about the evils of Rio and Copacabana. See chapter 1.

<sup>23</sup> *As Férias de Marionette*:140.

<sup>24</sup> In one novel the heroine complains to a peasant mother about the lack of moral principles in the education of her daughter: *Why did you let her get these worldly habits and improper manners? Of course she feels like an outsider here and does not want to accomplish heavy tasks anymore. In her imagination, she considers herself superior to her family, despising the country jobs of her ancestors. Meu Vestido Cor do Céu*, 59.

<sup>25</sup> M. Goudareau, *O Segredo de Magali* [ Le Mistère du Chateau D'AprèsBise]; Jean Rosmer, *A Princesa e a Cigana* [ no reference of the original title]; *A Herdeira de Ferlac; Canção de Outrora:O Segredo do Velho Martin; A Princesa de Neve*.

<sup>26</sup> “When I saw her [the idle peasant girl] with her floury face, and clownlike ornaments, I regarded it as a personal offence. I feel upset in thinking that she belongs to one of our best and most traditional peasant families.” *Meu Vestido*



The idea that physical and moral qualities are transmitted by blood, which minimises the effects of bad or humble environments, is quite strong. In this sense “more than a substance, blood is a vector, a transmitter of moral and physical qualities.”<sup>28</sup> For M. Delly’s characters heredity is a powerful element in determining not only the physical, but also the moral character of the persons.<sup>29</sup>

This also stresses the importance of descending from ‘good families’ and of the early education received at home.<sup>30</sup> Thus, heroines are never contaminated by a bad environment. In the same way that the qualities of aristocracy are revealed in the delicacy of one’s figure; moral virtues will also shine through in spite of the dirtiness of situation.<sup>31</sup> To be in an environment without being part of it; and the idea that virtue prevails over vice is the principal teachings of the books for young girls.

## *Heroism*

A highly praised virtue in these novels is heroism. The plots provide a chance for child characters, even the girls,<sup>32</sup> to prove their enduring will-power, their loyalty or their courage by acting in a heroic way. These actions benefited parents, relatives, close friends or benefactors. Thus, heroism was an extreme way of caring for the family and therefore, part of the female's role.

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*Cor do Céu*:80. M. Delly intentionally used absurd terms to despise and stress the ridicule and cheapness of the peasant girl’s supposed elegance. Although the authors usually despise the exaggerated and fashionable way the secondary characters dress, M. Delly never used words like floury face *and* clownlike ornaments in reference to women of higher classes.

<sup>27</sup> The comparison between an idle peasant girl and the heroine is ironically expressed by M. Delly: “If my hands cannot be as delicate, at least they can be white like the yours. And she showed me her thick fingers, whitened by a cheap lotion. Her nude arms exhibited stiff muscles under a brownish skin. She put them beside the heroine’s pearly white delicate arms and slim hands of elegant appearance.” *Meu Vestido Cor do Céu*:64.

<sup>28</sup> ABREU, 1980:171,172. He analyses the idea of blood (*sangue*) as the basic element to confirm kinship among Brazilian middle class families.

<sup>29</sup> In *Mitzi*, the heroine is despised because she is the daughter of a dancer, probably a gypsy, thus, has a ‘natural’ tendency towards robbery and lasciviousness. Actually, her mother was the daughter of an impoverished aristocrat, and in spite of being a dancer, she has high moral virtues – a revelation that stresses the previous prejudices. Elinor Glyn pursues a similar plot in ‘*The Great Moment*’.

<sup>30</sup> In M. Delly’s *Alma em Flor* [‘La Jeune Fille Emmuré] the heroine had been fostered by an aunt who decided that the girl should not learn anything about religion or love. Later her friends will work towards her conversion to Catholicism, greatly facilitated because of the early influence and ‘the seeds’ left by a religious and caring mother. This novel represents the inversion of the pattern of the religious girl who converts her impious fiancé.

<sup>31</sup> For instance, in a novel the girl runs out of the convent and is sheltered by an old woman who exploits children, making them raise money as beggars and thieves *A Fugitiva*. It is the same situation of Charles Dickens’ *Oliver Twist*. See also *A Princesa e a Cigana*, which copies the plot of Mark Twain’s *The Prince and the Poor*. The image of ‘the lily on the swamp’ is recurrent in romantic literature as Jose de Alencar’s ‘*Lucíola*’. See also MARTINS, 1977:176-183.

<sup>32</sup> As in ‘*Nas Malhas do Destino*’, *O Mistério de Kerjonc*, *A Afilhada do Imperador*.

Heroic female protagonists are not strange to popular imagery. In fairy tales such as *Os Sete Corvos* (The Seven Ravens)<sup>33</sup> or *'Florinda e o Papagaio Verde'* (Florinda and the Green Parrot),<sup>34</sup> heroines are also required to perform courageous acts. However, it is interesting to analyse which kind of penalties they have to endure to accomplish these tasks. Florinda had to walk 'to the end of the world' to meet her Charming Prince again. For this she would have to wear a dress made of iron and 7 pair of shoes, equally made of iron, to reach that place. She would have to use them to prove her love and fidelity to her fiancé – or the endurance of her love. In the same way the faithful sister of the seven ravens had to wear until they were in tatters, seven shirts made of nettles, she herself wove. Worst of all, she had to stay mute during the whole process, since a single word would condemn them to live spell-bound forever. In these examples, it is woman's perseverance, and will-power which is put to the test. It also means the surpassing of feminine characteristics regarded as defects – women's vanity, their talkativeness and attachment to fashion. Nothing is further from fashion, to which ideas of beauty and temporality are attached, than clothes made of nettles or of iron – supposed to last endlessly. On the other hand, there is an ironic element in a trial which requests muteness from woman.

Heroines also sacrifice themselves in horrible marriages with beasts, giants and monsters to save the life of the father. In the same way, in romantic novels they also sacrifice their love aspirations to convenient marriages to very rich men, to save their family from ruin, either financial or moral.<sup>35</sup>

Heroines of fairy tales have been more commonly regarded as examples of passiveness and submissiveness in contrast to the heroes who have to fight, travel to the most remote places, or have their courage put to the test. Heroines backed heroes from home, or are the objects of his heroism – confined in caves, distant castles, very high towers, guarded by dragons, monsters, giants. The comparison of male and female heroic gestures in fairy tales reveals a great deal about the expectations which are invested in gender roles.

Gratitude is another highly praised virtue. When it is felt in a poor person towards a rich one, it is translated into unlimited devotion even giving up one's own life. When it is felt in rich person towards a poor one, it is translated as giving them a good but subaltern job (porter, gardener) and the opportunity of living closer.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>The Twelve Wild Ducks' is a similar Norwegian folk-tale which forms the basis of Hans Christian Andersen's 'The Wild Ducks.' See CARTER, 1992.

<sup>34</sup> Also called 'O Papagaio do Limo Verde,' (ROMERO, 1954) 'O Papagaio Real'. Câmara Cascudo points out that the story 'The Prince as Bird' is well known in Europe. (CASCUDO, 1967).

<sup>35</sup> M. Delly's *Escrava ou Rainha*.

<sup>36</sup> *A Princesa e a Cigana; A Canção de Outrora*.

Therefore, the stereotypes of social classes are reinforced: the good poor people are forever faithful and in exchange for the benefits they had once received, they are expected to give the only thing they have – their own life. On the other hand the rich, prove their gratitude to the poor, giving them just the enough to allow them a decent life. These rich families will never support projects of upward mobility, because they are the guardians of the divine order which divides humankind into rich and poor. Again the conservative character of this literature is underlined.

## *The Universe of Romantic Love*

Romance and romantic love are the raw material for the books of the three collections favoured by adolescent girls – the *Coleção Rosa*, *Coleção Azul* and *Biblioteca das Moças (Coleção Verde)*. Three authors reveal different religious conceptions of love: a Christian interpretation by M. Delly and by Florence L. Barclay to whom erotic and divine love were inextricable; and love representing the apotheosis of humankind in the doctrinal framework of Reincarnation and Social Evolutionism, for Elinor Glyn.<sup>37</sup>

Besides this religious vision of love, they also stressed domesticity (Louisa May Alcott's novels), or described the daily life of modern ordinary people (Rose Franken's novels). However, for the majority of authors, their novels were not the means by which to transmit religious or social theses. They considered 'compensating dream fiction', not as an opiate, but as a tonic, and preferred to leave the tale on a note definitely gay and hopeful. Bertha Ruck<sup>38</sup> who had several of her books translated in the *Biblioteca das Moças* is reported to have said

*I think it is very wrong to give Youth the impression that [the world] is unutterably doomed to disappointment. C'est en croyant aux roses, says a French proverb, qu'on les fait éclore. It is by believing in roses that one brings them into bloom...*<sup>39</sup>

A special position is occupied by E.M. Hull's novels which anchored the desert as place for untamed sexuality firmly in the public's imagination.

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<sup>37</sup> ANDERSON, 1974.

<sup>38</sup> Berta Ruck was the pseudonym of Amy Roberta (Ruck) Olivier (1878-1978). She started to publish her novels in serialised form in 1914.

<sup>39</sup> Bertha Ruck, *a Story Teller Tells the Truth* (1935), quoted by ANDERSON, 1974:176.

## *Delly's fairy tales*

M. Delly<sup>40</sup> was the celebrated pseudonym of brother and sister Frédéric and Jeanne Petitjean de la Rosière. The impression they left on their readers was well encapsulated in the forewords to Rosana Prado's article about M. Delly on the later memories she and her friends had about

*the palpitations, the redness and throbbing hearts... the trembling eyelids, lowering eyelashes of the heroines we had never been able to be... and the demanding eyes, wicked eyebrows, ardent flames and golden glitter on the gaze of the heroes we had never been able to meet.*<sup>41</sup>

Rosana Prado argues that everything in M. Delly's novels – aristocratic figures and their life style, ambience, costumes, manners were far removed from the daily life of Brazilian middle-class readers. That aristocratic environment contributed to a kind of fairy-tale atmosphere.<sup>42</sup> I would argue that such likeness is due to structural characteristics which M. Delly's novels share with folk-tales,<sup>43</sup> such as the paradigmatic character of the figures and the vagueness in terms of time and space.

*Once upon a time* between the middle of the nineteenth and the twentieth century;<sup>44</sup> on the French coast, in a small village, in countryside. All of these precise geographical points are actually prototypical: Paris represents the large city, Normandy or Alsace are just names, the provinces.<sup>45</sup> Brazil and South America are the other side of the world, where people go to forget disillusion, try to make a fortune, always with negative consequences. The Orient is the place where nobles venture on long journeys, and from where dancers, spies, treacherous enemies had come or the nobles had brought devoted servants or illicit, passionate and jealous lovers.

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<sup>40</sup> According to BOURIN, A & ROUSSELOT, J. *Dictionnaire de la Littérature Française Contemporaine*, Frédéric Petitjean de la Rosière (Vannes 1876 Versailles 1949) and his sister Jeanne (Avignon 1875 Versailles, 1947) wrote together a great number of sentimental novels, with well elaborated happy-ending plots, directed to the public in general regardless of age or sex. All of them had been translated into several languages always in large editions. Analyses of M. Delly's novels have been carried out by PRADO, 1981 and CUNHA, 1993.

<sup>41</sup> PRADO, 1981:73.

<sup>42</sup> Prado mentions that sometimes it is more explicit through allusions to fairy tale characters such as Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty.

<sup>43</sup> These characteristics of folk-tales atemporality; imprecision of space, paradigmatic figures are pointed out by the Brazilian folklorist Luiz da Câmara Cascudo who made in several books review essays of traditional theories about the elements and meanings of folk-tales. See for instance his *'Literatura Oral'*. It is beyond the scope of this work to investigate a possible similarity of both structures romantic novels and popular tales according to other authors.

<sup>44</sup> There are few exceptions. The ambience of some novels is the First World War: *Freirinha*; *Elfrida* and *O Rei de Kidji* [Le Roi de Kidji]; the trilogy *Elza*, *Florinda* and *Castelo em Ruínas* [Le Mystère de KerEven] *O Fim de Uma Walkyria* [La Fin d'une Walkyrie] where German relatives or acquaintances are fanatical, treacherous and revengeful persons, spies and merciless enemies. They are no less stereotyped than French or British heroes.

<sup>45</sup> The contrast is more evident when compared with another French author from the same collection, Guy de Chantepleure, who describes regional customs, rivers, mountains giving more precise geographical indications.

The heroine is the paragon of Christian feminine virtues. The hero is always the rich, selfish, ambitious, impious tyrant, totally transformed at the end of the story by the love and example of the heroine. The feminine virtues are stressed in contrast to the secondary characters, who embody all the possible defects of woman – they are vain, impudent, selfish, unkind and arrogant. The heroine is always unconscious of her naturally stunning beauty, and innate elegance – revealed in the humblest and simplest attire always in pale colours;<sup>46</sup> whilst the anti-heroines<sup>47</sup> either are ill-looking or have an ‘artificial’ beauty, as they favour brilliant colours and excessively adorned dresses. This emphasises the pattern of ‘taste’ revealed by simplicity, light colours, economy of jewels or adornments<sup>48</sup> which is popularly called the ‘classical style,’ supposed to be a distinguishing feature of the elite women considered to be of good taste.<sup>49</sup> In the same way she ‘naturally’ had the skills to fulfil the accomplishments of a great dame.

However, the main characteristic of the heroine is her firm attachment to Catholic religion. Thus she is intransigent in religious matters and in the defence of her purity.<sup>50</sup> In the best tradition of the legends of the martyrs,<sup>51</sup> religion and virginity bestow strength upon her so that she may resist temptation and overcome hardship.

It is her immovable attachment to religion that changes the previous attitude of the hero towards her. As he had always been a womaniser and worldly man, he is sceptical about feminine virtues. Although apparently he praises the fashionable women he used to court, in reality the hero despises feminine frivolity, extreme vanity and skills in seducing man. When he realises that religion makes the heroine different from the others, he deeply changes his attitudes and becomes a religious<sup>52</sup> and charitable man.

M. Delly’s heroines stress two important roles woman is supposed to perform. First, the woman is to be responsible for the family’s spirituality. Religious manuals stressed that woman can change man’s behaviour, and must transpose to spiritual life what she is

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<sup>46</sup> Mauve was the heroine’s favourite colour, and it was translated into Portuguese as ‘malva’, the name of a herb, not of a colour. Rosane Prado made an informal inquiry about what a mauve dress should look like and the answers were: *a light colour, a quite light colour, light pink, champagne-like colour, ‘bois de rose,’ pale green, lilac, something between brown and beige*. That means that the [unknown] colour was also part of the reader’s fantasy, or of the wonders of that distant universe, as the names of unknown flowers (heather, daffodils, lilacs, clematis), and trees of the Northern Hemisphere also were. PRADO, 1981:98.

<sup>47</sup> PRADO, 1981 suggests that the secondary figures reproduce the characteristics of the opposite sex, thus, the male secondary figures are weak, physically or spiritually. Conversely, the arrogance and unkindness of the female secondary figures reproduced masculine defects. About ‘artificial beauty’ see chapter 6.

<sup>48</sup> Baudrillard calls it ‘austere ostentation.’ see BAUDRILLARD, 1981:77 - 78.

<sup>49</sup> For the discussion about the ‘classical style’ of clothes and house decoration, considered a sign of refinement see OLIVEIRA SILVA, 1985:197- 200.

<sup>50</sup> *Escrava ou Rainha, Mitzi, Magali*.

<sup>51</sup> See ARMSTRONG 1986, WARNER, 1985.

<sup>52</sup> This includes his conversion from Orthodox Catholicism [*Escrava ou Rainha*] or from Hinduism [*Sous L’Oeil des Brahmes*].

supposed to know 'naturally': that is, to use feminine skills to obtain from man everything she wants. Second the woman is to intercede in favour of his employees, the weak and the poor. Before knowing the heroine, the hero is intolerant in relation to his servant's minor faults, easily firing those considered inconvenient, irrespective of their personal problems and needs. As the mediator between the [rich] husband and his subordinates, woman replicates one aspect of Mary's motherhood which only the elite woman can emulate. Mary is at the same time the mother of Jesus Christ and the mother of humankind. The first aspect of Mary's divine motherhood allows the identification of any mother with her. But the second one, which transforms Mary into the mediator between humankind and God, could only be replicated by the elite woman when she acts as the loudspeaker of subordinates' needs. It is no coincidence that even when this elite woman is not the real one, she is referred to as the godmother of those mediated by her.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, in several ways M. Delly's heroines are not only the ideal woman, but the ideal upper-class woman.

## *Elinor Glyn's Theories of Reincarnation and Social Evolution*

Elinor Glyn's books differ from others of the '*Biblioteca das Moças*' in many ways. First she used her books to expose her ideas and worldview, which contrasted with the Christian mainstream view espoused by other authors. Second, Elinor Glyn did not proclaim domesticity or motherhood in her novels. On the contrary they are derided as petty bourgeois values.<sup>54</sup> Glyn's ideas about adultery and immorality attacked the foundations of the doctrine so laboriously inculcated in Catholic girls,<sup>55</sup> moreover, Evolutionism and Reincarnation were strongly denied by Catholicism. And thus her novels were proscribed from the libraries of convents. However, for the same reason, the young readers represented these books as more serious and adult than the others of the same collection, and consumed them as 'forbidden fruits.'

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<sup>53</sup> This only makes sense in the context of *Compadrio*, as analysed in chapters 8.

<sup>54</sup> See *O Diário de uma Aristocrata* [Reflections of Ambrosine]; *O Diário de Evangelina* [The Vicissitudes of Evangeline]:57.

<sup>55</sup> The heroine of *Three Weeks* speaks for the author: *Here we are, you and me so closely joined, so happily together. However, from the viewpoint of these stupid laws we are both criminal, and you should have, as a more noble destiny, a life gaping beside a frigid English lady you choose to marry, and me, besides a mad, drunken husband. All of this, because law made us swear that we would stay apart from any other emotion. Emotions that we cannot govern, as cannot the trees when facing a wild wind. Love! Oh yes, they say in front of the altar where 'God joins them'. As if two human creatures who hate themselves, could not swear impossible things for political purposes or for family's conveniences. These people profane human love. Love is for us, who are together because all of our beings shout: 'He is my companion!' 'She is my companion!' I wouldn't say anything if it were a pretence... marriage. To my best opinion, marriage is but a contract where one says: 'Yes, I give you my body and my dowry.' And the other, 'Yes I give you my name and social status!' These are the meek horrible things that one must support in life. But, to say that God bless it as an exaltation ...! And living this false life saying that it is in the name of love! All of this infuriates God, and I feel like Him, His wrath.* from *Três Semanas de Amor*:56.

Glyn articulated her beliefs that the classes of society were separated by virtually impassable chasms; entry into the upper class could only be effected by birth, for it required the inherited traditions of hundreds of years of authority to produce a gentleman..<sup>56</sup> She gave consistency to these ideas through her acceptance of scientific evolutionism and its religious counterpart, the doctrine of reincarnation. From them derived her defence of the aristocracy; of an authoritarian ruling class, her scorn for the aristocratic weakness – responsible for the ascendancy of the political *radicals* and *nouveaux riches*; her disdain of the petty bourgeoisie and her moral values.<sup>57</sup>

Unlike M.Delly's books whose aristocratic setting seems to have the sole purpose of giving a fairy-tale atmosphere to the novels, Glyn was a fine chronicler of customs and did describe the aristocracy's life style with accuracy in recording the minor detail: "of manners, moral, decorations and above all clothes and general atmosphere [...] as if she was looking at them as she writes."<sup>58</sup>

Thus Brazilian teenage girls became familiar with the Edwardian aristocracy's way of life, its exciting environment of country houses weekend visits and shooting parties. - seen through Glyn's lens - as she vividly described

*'These so-called Saturday-to-Mondays [which] were at the hub of Edwardian society; the fulcrum on which it turned. First and simplest, they were an opportunity to see one's friends and exchange news at greater leisure than was possible on formal occasions in London. Second... , they provided the perfect opportunity for sexual encounters. It was far easier for married couples to separate by night or day, over a course of a weekend, and pursue their romantic interests for a few private hours, than it would have been for two people who were not married to each other to meet illicitly at a hotel or even a restaurant [...] Third a weekend in the country was an ideal setting for political, social or financial intrigue.'*<sup>59</sup>

Elinor Glyn's heroes were men with "wild earthy passions and splendid eyes which blaze with the passions of wild beasts" whilst the heroines – with strange names such as Tamara, Zara, Laline, Amaryllis<sup>60</sup> – were "proud refined girls whose nostrils quiver at

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<sup>56</sup> These ideas are clearly represented by one of her characters – Tamara – the heroine of *His Hour* who spent almost the whole book visiting her Russian godmother: *She realised that here was one place left in Europe where there were no parvenus and no snobs or if there were any, they were beautifully concealed. Such absolute sincerity and charm [of the Russian elite] can only stay in a society where no one is trying 'to arrive,' all there naturally by birth* Quoted ETHERINGTON - SMITH & PILCHER, 1985,:132. In the Brazilian version *Seu Único amor* [ *His Hour*].65-66.

<sup>57</sup> These ideas are most visible in *Tudo se Paga*. [The Price of Things], *Ressuscitada pelo Amor* [The Sequence], *O Homem e a Escrava (Macho e Fêmea)* [Man and the Maid].

<sup>58</sup> ETHERINGTON-SMITH & PILCHER, 1985:78. It is my impression that the records about English society at the turn of the century in DAVIDOFF, 1985 could be easily exemplified by quotations from Elinor Glyn's novels.

<sup>59</sup> LAMBERT, 1984:136.

<sup>60</sup> *Seu Único Amor; Tudo se Paga, Sels Semanas de Amor, [ Six Weeks of Love]; Por Qué ? [The Reason Why]*

intervals.”<sup>61</sup> The author transposed to her heroines the description of her own figure – “her great beauty, her erect carriage, her queenly presence, her imperious glance... her magnolia-white skin.”<sup>62</sup> That exoticism would be responsible for the heroine’s devilish beauty which would drive men crazy: a situation far removed from M.Delly’s candid heroines and their almost platonic love.

Even more exciting in Elinor Glyn’s novels were the so-called ‘aristocratic regulations and transgressions’ presented as moral standards in frank opposition to what was habitually prescribed for Brazilian middle-class girls. Adultery was considered to be the ‘natural’ sequence to the arranged marriage, provided ‘the unwritten upper-class code’ was observed (“that only when marriage had produced a son and heir to safeguard the family property could a woman begin to think of making her own sexual choices.”)<sup>63</sup> In *Reflections of Ambrosine*, an elder French Marquess explained to the heroine: “Do not forget ‘*chère enfant*,’ that marriage is a social exigency and not a pleasure [...] but it opens the doors of freedom “*et de tous les autres agréments de la vie pour une femme.*”<sup>64</sup> It very much contrasted with the cultural complex of honour and shame which imposed virginity for the single girls and strict fidelity for the wives and modesty for all.<sup>65</sup>

However, although tolerated, adultery is pictured by the author as an imperfect form of relationship, a mere satisfaction of instincts, and hence a concession to their imperfect animal-like character. Thus in Glyn’s novels, it is reserved for the secondary characters. Actually, the hero had been involved in these open unions until he met the heroine. So in the best of M.Delly’s traditions, it is in woman’s hands to change man’s ‘natural’ polygamous tendencies, showing him the good of a more ‘elevated’ form of love.

Not only were Glyn’s characters free to live out their passion, free from bourgeois moral conditioning; they were pictured as persons who have ‘*it*’, that mysterious innate quality – “one of the rarest gifts in the world.”<sup>66</sup> – which, no matter how mysteriously Elinor Glyn described it remained raw sex appeal. Whether one has ‘*it*’ or not became the question of the day.<sup>67</sup> This expression was still known in the Brazilian 1950s, and then used in advertisements

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<sup>61</sup> ANDERSON, 1974:129.

<sup>62</sup> As described by her grandson . GLYN, 1955:13

<sup>63</sup> LAMBERT, 1989.:154. It had to be handled in a “civilised and discreet fashion,” an heir should have already been born, then “any children of these outside liaisons were always accepted and reared as the husband’s child.” LAMBERT, 1984:39.

<sup>64</sup> *O Diário de uma Aristocrata*:26.

<sup>65</sup> See chapter 2 of this thesis.

<sup>66</sup> Interview in *Photoplay* 1926. Quoted by ETHERINGTON-SMITH & PILCHER, 1985:240.

<sup>67</sup> The novel she wrote to expound her ideas about the meeting of an ‘*it*’ man to an ‘*it*’ girl was later adapted for film with Clara Bow, who became known as ‘The It Girl’.



Her heroes and heroines had reached the zenith of social and spiritual evolution, thus were capable of a spiritual form of love reserved for but a few.<sup>68</sup> This idea could be decoded as matching the ideas of religious manuals, with totally opposed consequences: instead of the dull relationship reserved for the majority, as advised by Levallet-Montal, it could free them for adultery.<sup>69</sup> An idea that probably Brazilian girls regarded as exotic because of their deeply embodied ideas about honour.

Their 'highest form of love', gave to Glyn's central characters a sense of uniqueness, a kind of 'religious sublimation' that would not admit a 'tertius' among the couple. Heroes always proclaimed their sense of exclusivity, their jealous feeling of property, expressed as the impossibility of assuming a civilised attitude towards flirting let alone adultery. Brazilian girls could also decode it as parallel to the jealousy demands of their boy-friends,<sup>70</sup> and in the author find the justification for their compliance.

It is important to stress that there was no place for physical passion in other authors' novels from the same collection, still less was adultery mentioned, perhaps euphemistically as 'the sin of a woman' which always brought "irremediable disgrace to her life, until death could repair the loss of virtue."<sup>71</sup>

Girls represented Glyn's novels as parallel to their brother's pornographic comics, for speaking albeit metaphorically of physical passion, and sexual desire giving them the aura of forbidden fruit.<sup>72</sup> However, under the cover of '*Biblioteca das Moças*' the novels had the legitimisation of 'good girl's literature' and were easily available. It is amazing that Glyn's novels could find a place among naive books for adolescents, given all the prescriptions and care about moral influence on girls in the 1950s. The reason why the editors of the *Biblioteca das Moças* accepted Glyn's books remains a mystery.

Indeed those girls were not entirely wrong in identifying Elinor Glyn's novels with pornography: after the Second World War "heroines were never again to know the wild sweet joy of mad passionate love," such as suggested in Elinor Glyn's and E.M.Hull's novels, since these "experiences began to be eased out of romantic fiction and into

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<sup>68</sup> In *Três Semanas de Amor*:126, the couple wondered about love among the lower classes: " what do the ordinary man and woman understand about love ? - They think that they understand. They do think so. But a love like ours only happens once in a century [...]"

<sup>69</sup> See 'True Love' in chapter 4 of this thesis.

<sup>70</sup> See the process of courtship — chapter 2 of this thesis.

<sup>71</sup> The only novel where the central characters lived an adulterous relationship is *The Sequence*. However, they also have to 'pay a price' for breaking 'the law of cause and effect,' according to the author.

<sup>72</sup> In the 1930s, at least three of Elinor Glyn's novels were published in a collection named '*Biblioteca da Mulher Moderna*' (The Modern Woman's Library) among authors such as Collette and André Maurois, and books with titles which sensual connotations : 'The Power of the Flesh,' 'The Corner of Sins,' 'The Ingenuous Libertine,' 'Love in Scandinavia.' It is, therefore, amazing that Glyn's novels could later find a place among naive books for adolescents, given all the prescriptions and care about moral influence on girls in the 1950s.

pornography,"<sup>73</sup> naturally, in a form more explicit than the previous allusions and metaphors.

### *Florence L. Barclay's Religious Exaltation*<sup>74</sup>

In 1909 Florence Louise Barclay published *The Rosary*, one of the most cherished novels from the *Biblioteca das Moças*. Just as in Edwardian England, up to the 1960s, "it had been read and wept over"<sup>75</sup> by every teenage Brazilian girl. It is the love story of the Honourable Jane Champion – a plain but big-hearted woman of thirty, already resigned to spinsterhood – and a famous society painter who had fallen in love with her after hearing her wonderful singing of *The Rosary*, a popular song in Edwardian England. The heroine falls in love, but, for knowing that he had always declared that physical beauty was essential to him, she sacrifices her own love. However, later he becomes blind after a shooting accident, and the novel examines how she pretended to be his hired nurse, restored his will to live and proved the vital and restorative powers of the state of being in love towards a religiously exalted happy-ending.

This author put back deep religion into romantic fiction. Although Elinor Glyn's fixation on sex and Florence Barclay's preoccupation with God seem to have little in common, they were paradoxically ardent revivalists of the 'erotic-divine' message – "That message which attempts to prove, through mortal love, the existence of God and his divine love."<sup>76</sup>

Barclay's books are full of quotations from the Bible, Christmas carols and religious hymns. Her recurrent theme is that of the Christian conversion of one or other of the partners in love. The author conveyed a religious atmosphere and spiritual worship

[By the] *enthusiastic use of capital letters, not only for the personal pronouns of members of the Trinity, but also for anything which sounds vaguely religious – Unseen, The Great Chance, Love, Life... and by frequent repetition of emotive words like thrill, throb, tender, soul, gentle, strange and sweet; and by quoting large chunks of the better-known scriptures.*<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> ANDERSON, 1974:223.

<sup>74</sup> Florence Louisa Barclay (1862 -1921) was the devoted wife of a pastor of a small parish in the Surrey countryside. Her married life was long devoted to looking after the parishioners besides the rearing of her own large family. That is why she began to write novels only much later and published few but successful books. Her writing career was thought of as the extension of her religious duties; thus she stated that her objective was "never to write a line which could introduce the taint of sin, or the shadow of shame into any home." *Florence Barclay, a biography by one of her daughters*.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*:121.

<sup>76</sup> Rachel Anderson comments: [*Barclay's*] *characters behave as histrionically, love as ardently, suffer as fervently, and are in general just as confused by their emotional lives as Mrs Glyn's, but it is all done on a pure and spiritual plane* ANDERSON, 1974:121.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*:139.

Florence Barclay was just a devoted wife of wife of a pastor of a small parish in the Surrey countryside, nonetheless she also described the upper-crust life style, the manor houses, country house parties – without Glyn's allusions to illicit lovers. Her stories never have villains, but foolish, misguided people needing conversion, or the discovery of true love.

### *A Secluded Sexuality*

Apparently, love was “carried out without the inconvenience of sex” by the majority of writers of romantic novels. However, there is no doubt that sex is a latent issue disguised by metaphors or epitomised by kisses. Kisses in romantic novels and fairy tales were the sensuous manifestation of love, standing proxy for any form of sexual contact. This gives the kiss an important role in adolescent's imagination. Invested with ambiguity, the meaning of the kiss went far beyond the act, according to the reader's fantasy.

In traditional fairy-tales, or in modern ones, kisses came just before the final revelation that the couple ‘lived happily forever after’. *Snow White* and *Sleeping Beauty* had been awakened from a deathlike sleep – which has been interpreted as a metaphor for feminine adolescence<sup>78</sup> – by the Charming Prince's love kisses, a metaphor for sexual intercourse.<sup>79</sup> This metaphor is made clear in Berta Ruck's '*The Unkissed Wife*,' when the hero's friend says: “It will be an arranged marriage to be ended at the church's door so you won't kiss your wife and it will be easily annulled.”<sup>80</sup>

For the Catholic Church the unconsummated marriage – that is the one without sexual relationships– unless that was freely and previously agreed by the couple – is null and void because the sacrament is not completed. Therefore, it is not about kisses that Berta Ruck is speaking, and in her novel, more than being a metaphor, the kiss is a metonym of sexual intercourse.

The same metaphor is also present in a report about a young Hollywood star, which was a counter the critiques of those who regarded films as a school of evil: “Debra (Paget) is nineteen and has never been kissed.”<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> This metaphor is made clear in '*Three Weeks*. Not surprisingly since the young hero is seduced by an older woman, in this case it is him who is compared to the *Sleeping Beauty*. Elinor Glyn, *Three Weeks*.

<sup>79</sup> CHAUI, 1984. See also KOLBENSCHLAG, 1979. For the psychoanalytic interpretation of the fairy tales, see BETTELHEIM, 1979.

<sup>80</sup> In italics on the original. To be married was the condition for the hero, an obstinate bachelor, to enrol for a good job. In the Brazilian edition, *A esposa que não foi beijada*:24.

<sup>81</sup> Reports like this stressed the traditional values the Church were struggling for. A similar one was published in *Lar Católico* about the Colombian Luz Marina, Miss Universe in 1958, who had made the same sort of declaration. The author considered that: “she gave a good example of social behaviour to our girls. Mainly for those who think and act according to another standard of modern life.” Adalberto de Paula Nunes Uma Lição às Brasileiras. (*Lar Católico*, 46 (50) 14/12/ 1958.) Contrary to Debra Paget who proclaimed ‘the virginity of her lips’ beyond the screen, in 1957 Pat

*Her lips remain virgins. Only professionally have they been kissed by men like James Stewart, Louis Jordan and Richard Conte. ... Of course there are also her father's, nieces', brothers' and sisters'. But they can't be counted, especially because this sort of kiss does not thrill the backbone giving 'strange sensations'.<sup>82</sup>*

Debra Paget is like a modern Cinderella: the plain girl who turned out to be a Hollywood film star. The text is ambiguous and metonymical, since it refers to her [alleged] virginity – not only her lips. It also states that she is not frigid, but “perhaps only a bit wary,” making more explicit the metonymical character of the text. As fairy tale heroines – Snow White or Sleeping Beauty – Debra Paget and the readers were waiting for the day the Charming Prince would arrive:

*[to] take her in his arms, as if she were a doll, to kiss her softly and gently (But not in the same way her family used to.) And when this precious moment comes, she will not be afraid anymore. She will hear a voice from the depths of her heart saying : Awake and Live<sup>83</sup>*

Like any ordinary girl, she needed a man to give life to her, to make her a subject. She was not considered a grown-up person in spite of being the real breadwinner of the whole family,<sup>84</sup> which contrasts with the image of Sleeping Beauty attached to her.<sup>85</sup>

In M.Delly's romantic novels as in fairy tales,<sup>86</sup> kisses also come in the last chapter, usually preceding the news that one year later the couple would have an heir to complete their perennial happiness. Kisses in M.Delly's romantic novels are always in the heroine's hair or on her “golden eyelashes,” the hero could “slightly graze his lips on her forehead” or theatrically bend his knees to respectfully kiss her hands. The heroine never kissed him, at most, she would lean her head on his chest, as an act of abandonment and confidence. Even when the marriage happens at the beginning of the novel,<sup>87</sup> there is no allusion to intimacy between the couple. Chiefly in these cases, sex is incorporated into the idea of love and in allusions such as “she lowered her eyes under the burning flame of his gaze;” “the golden sparks in his eyes dominated her, provoking emotions of anguish and joy;” “she felt herself drawn in by the ardent caress of his eyes.”<sup>88</sup>

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Boone refused to kiss on screen, for religious and personal reasons. He explained: 'I've always been taught that when you get married you forget about kissing other women.' Quoted by ROSEN,1975:291.

<sup>82</sup> *O Cruzeiro*, 21/11/ 1953:41.

<sup>83</sup> *O Cruzeiro*, Ibid.:36.

<sup>84</sup> *O Cruzeiro*, Ibid.:41.

<sup>85</sup> *Cinelândia* (117) Sept. 1957:41.

<sup>86</sup> See PRADO, 1981.

<sup>87</sup> *Escrava ou Rainha; Entre Duas Almas*.

<sup>88</sup> Respectively from *Orieta*:91; *A Vingança de Ralph*:45. *Entre Duas Almas*:187.

Sex is also disguised in Florence L. Barclay's novels. In *The Rosary*, the relationship of the central couple is full of religious solemnity, and any physical contact between them is left to the reader's inference: from phrases such as – "Her arms enveloped him, yearning, tender and hungry with the repressing longing" which was followed by "a long ineffable silence," by the submersion into "a storm of emotions" before 'a divine calmness.' Finally at the dénouement:

*Garth surrounded his wife's body and, closely embraced, they went inside the house. Supported by her husband's arm, lips opened for the coming kiss, Jane was cast into the abyss of the raptures of conjugal life.<sup>89</sup>*

In spite of the religious atmosphere, or because of it, man is the master and the same ideas of domination and submission are likewise present. Florence Barclay is as reticent as M. Delly's, on love scenes, which are only suggested by the choice of an expressive vocabulary.

Elinor Glyn created somewhat bizarre situations involving the sexual life of her figures, which only make sense in the context of the author's ideas about evolutionism and her defence of aristocracy at any price.<sup>90</sup> However, in general their heroes "audacious, fiery-blooded animals though they are" hardly manage to get their heroines into bed. In a few books they do succeed – but only briefly – or just once – at the beginning of the plot. Naturally, there are no descriptions of these scenes, but more or less explicit insinuations to fire the reader's imagination.<sup>91</sup>

### *Animal Images as Metaphors for Sex*

Romantic writers used animal images and allusions to represent physical love. Florence Barclay's spiritual heroines were faced with passionate heroes who could be "like a royal tiger who had tasted blood," who could make her understand

*the primal elements which go to the making of a man – a forceful, determined, ruling man – creation's king. The echo of primeval forests. The roar of the lion is in them, the fierceness of the tiger; the instinct of dominant possession, which says; "Mine to have and hold, to fight and enjoy; and I slay all comers!" She had felt it, and her own brave soul had understood it*

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<sup>89</sup> *O Rosário*:255.

<sup>90</sup> Such as the changing of the impotent husband in the wedding bed, because a 'perfect heir' was needed to refrain the title of going to the wrong hands. The same reason is presented for the seduction of a young British man by an elder foreign and exotic princess who wanted to give to her country not a heir born from their drunken, unfaithful and evil king.

<sup>91</sup> In *Six Days of Love* the couple are trapped in a bunker which they were visiting in France. Conveniently they had been guided by an old priest, so they can marry before staying all by themselves by six days. Most appropriately, the priest dies, leaving them to survive from a bar of chocolate, some candles and a jar of water. They find the strength to dig a way out, not only from their precarious provisions, but from the recollection of the moments of the night before In Portuguese *Seis Dias de Amor*.

*and responded to it, unafraid; and been ready to mate with it, if only – ah! if only!*<sup>92</sup>

For Florence Barclay it meant that man's supremacy over woman is inscribed into male nature itself. Phrases such as *the fierceness of the tiger; the instinct of dominant possession*, tantalised Brazilian teenagers' imagination and echoed the jealous domination of their boyfriend – to whom these girls gladly submitted.<sup>93</sup>

In Glyn's work the tiger represents feminine sexuality, denoting a particular kind of animalistic sexual abandon.<sup>94</sup> This image was widely used in *Three weeks* in which the heroine spent days lying on tiger skins.<sup>95</sup> In a love scene the heroine of *Three Weeks*, who played the active part in the relationship,

*purred as a tiger might have done, while she undulated like a snake. She touched him with her finger-tips, she kissed his throat, his wrists, the palms of his hands, his eyelids, his hair. Strange subtle kisses, unlike the kisses of women. And often, between her purring, she murmured love-words in some fierce language of her own, brushing his ears and his eyes with her lips the while.*<sup>96</sup>

The idea that man is driven by sex is negatively presented as part of an animalistic nature,<sup>97</sup> contrary to the more spiritual feminine one. In Glyn's *The Reason Why*, the heroine reacts against the advance of the hero to whom she had just had an arranged marriage:

*Animal! She shrilled again, and words of hate burst from her lips...How do you dare to speak about love? What do you think that love is? Love is a pure true sentiment which you should not dirty. Love isn't this repulsive passion that men feel and you feel now just because I am a woman... Love! This is not love! This is a mere question of senses, you animal!*<sup>98</sup>

In Elinor Glyn's novels men usually reckon that they are a 'beast,' a 'brute' when they apologise for some kind of suffering they inadvertently inflicted on the heroine. Glyn justifies violence perpetrated in name of love, and it is worth quoting at length her argument as developed by the heroine of *Three Weeks*:

*A man can always keep the love of a woman if he wildly kisses her, and makes her believe that there's no use in struggling, because he is too strong for her to resist. A woman is powerless in the hands of a passionate lover. He can beat her, inflict sufferings on her delicate skin; can incarcerate her in*

<sup>92</sup> *O Rosário*:103-104.

<sup>93</sup> See chapter 2 of this thesis.

<sup>94</sup> ANDERSON, 1974:121

<sup>95</sup> The tiger skin was Elinor Glyn's constant presence for her home decoration, and a famous malicious and anonymous verses fixed that association for life: 'would you like to sin/ with Elinor Glyn/ on a tiger skin, or would you prefer to err with her on some other kind of fur?'

<sup>96</sup> *Três Semanas de Amor*:110.

<sup>97</sup> For instance, in *Love's Blindness* there is the comment 'what repugnant animals we are! We are attracted by a perfume...and when it disgusts us...our love goes away' [in the Brazilian version, *Cegueira de Amor*. p 27].

<sup>98</sup> 'Por quê?':137.

*a cell, deny her all friends; these things would not matter at all, when the reason derives from a mad love, from a jealous interest in keeping her only for him. The result will be an increase in her love of him.*

For the author, it is the best way to prevent adultery: "The reason why woman becomes adulterous is man's casualness after had awoken in her a certain taste for passionate joys."<sup>99</sup>

Animals as symbols of sex, or of unrestrained personalities are more present in romantic novels whose scenarios are exotic places – Russia, the Sahara, India. Likewise, these foreign heroes could be pictured in a less civilised manner than their British or French counterparts.<sup>100</sup>

In such novels, the hero's skill in dealing with animals represents a "symbolic forewarning of [their] taming of the heroine."<sup>101</sup> In Elinor Glyn's *His Hour*, Gritzko, the Russian prince, submits horses, threatens to let bears rend the heroine to pieces, fight duels, takes the heroine to his log cabin decorated with heads of deer and skins of wolves.<sup>102</sup> In turn, she is pictured as an entrapped doe.<sup>103</sup>

These images fired a young woman's imagination about man's and woman's role in marriage. They also reproduced the emphasis of manuals on sexual education, which pictured sex as a game between virtuous women defending themselves against the savage men – a game to be ended by domination and submission. However, even for Elinor Glyn there was a limit for the boldness of her heroes: in *His Hour* the wild Russian prince kidnaps the heroine, driving her in a troika through a snowstorm to an isolated chalet, with the explicit intention of "raping and thus 'taming' the heroine. But when she conveniently faints, his wild-beast passion melts into compassion. Instead of raping, he weeps and kisses her cold unconscious feet."<sup>104</sup> By contrast, rape was the central plot of E.M. Hull's *The Sheik*.

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<sup>99</sup> *Três Semanas de Amor*:105. As it was reported in chapter 2 of this thesis, the demands of Brazilian jealous 'namorados' had numerous forms of support for their 'loving violence,' as this.

<sup>100</sup> Particularly in *His Hour*, Elinor Glyn could go further in picturing this supposed 'brute' side of masculine behaviour, since she was describing a Russian prince instead of the formal, phlegmatic and educated British men – who acted as secondary figures.

<sup>101</sup> ANDERSON, 1974:191.

<sup>102</sup> In *Tês Semanas de Amor*:113, the heroine who is a foreign princess from a mysterious eastern European kingdom, and who plays the male role - intimidate her servants by ordering their whipping. The same did the Sheik.

<sup>103</sup> These images are expanded with the use of words such as primitive, wild or savage to describe his behaviour and descriptions such as "he had a strong magnetic personality," "rained mad kisses on her", acted with "incredible swiftness and audacity." In turn she received his kisses "on her trembling lips," "they burnt into her flesh," they made her "tremble under violent emotions." and feel a "wild thrilling running through her body."

<sup>104</sup> ANDERSON, 1974:130. In the Brazilian edition of *His Hour*, '*Seu Único Amor*', this scene is portrayed on pages 201 and 202.

## *E.M. Hull's Exotic And Untamed Sexuality*

Elinor Glyn shared her position of 'forbidden-though- much-read author' with E. M. Hull, who left less to her readers' imagination than the first, or who perhaps better knew how to excite their imagination. Her books were not published in the '*Biblioteca das Moças*,' but were found in the '*Coleção Paratodos*,'<sup>105</sup> represented as masculine because its novels were centred on adventures, war and escapism rather than matters of love.<sup>106</sup> However girls definitely kept for themselves both *The Sheik* and *The Son of the Sheik*, since no young men liked those torrid love adventures in the place of *real* adventures of war, conquering, and fights.

Ethel Maud Winstanley was the name of E.M.Hull, the author of the most famous 'desert novel' later also filmed with Rudolf Valentino. She had never left her home county when in 1919 she put the "desert on the map as a good place for sex."<sup>107</sup> and gave to the word Sheik " the new significance of a new image of masculinity...a virile, sensual male, a priapic, violent lover who masters females by sexual prowess and physical force."<sup>108</sup>

In *The Sheik*, the atmosphere of torrid passion and untamed love was heightened by the description of some desert scenes such as speedy chases on horseback, the tending of the horses, the galloping of Arab stallions enveloped by the whistling of the wind. As Billie Melman has observed, all of these were highly conventionalised set-pieces which prefigured or stressed the wildness of the desert and its inhabitants, the uncivilised character of the Arabs – that is, brutality and violence and its surrender to the impositions of nature. Therefore the heroine's destiny after being abducted by the Sheik was inexorable. The rape of the heroine was symbolically duplicated in her watching the taming of a colt. To the civilised tomboy and the animal there was no alternative other than submission to "the savagery and determination of the man [...to his] hideous exhibition of brute strength and merciless cruelty."<sup>109</sup>

Her formula was emulated by several writers: the story of a girl who goes off alone to be abducted and seduced by a mysterious, cruel and imperious Arab, in a modern version of *Little Red Riding Hood*.<sup>110</sup> As Rachel Anderson pointed out :

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<sup>105</sup> Both were edited by the *Companhia Editora Nacional*.

<sup>106</sup> Among the authors there was Rafael Sabatini, Rider Haggard, Robert L. Stevenson,

<sup>107</sup> ANDERSON, 1974:184.

<sup>108</sup> MELMAN, 1988:89.

<sup>109</sup> In the Brazilian version '*O Sheik*':119.

<sup>110</sup> *Little Red Riding Hood* is a 'tale of admonition'- according to Luiz da Câmara Cascudo's classification of folk-tales. CASCUDO, 1952. The direct message is clear 'woman should not go unattended to unknown places, because she could face 'the seducer', who could bring harm for girls. See BETTELHEIM, 1979 for a psychoanalytic analysis of its messages.



*The heroine, the beautiful but haughty Diana Mayo, is the first romantic heroine to be sexually assaulted, to learn during three hundred pages of it to enjoy it, and to marry the man who did it.*<sup>111</sup>

Rachel Anderson considers it “the most immoral of any of the romances”<sup>112</sup> not for lewd descriptions (which in fact it did not have) but rather for the distorting view the author presents of the kind of relationship which leads to perfect love – masculine physical imposition of dominance and complementary feminine masochism and passivity. It supported the theory that actually all women wanted to be raped, and the more emancipated and modern a woman is, the greater her desire to be humiliated and violated.<sup>113</sup>

E.M. Hull's books fired the imagination of Brazilian teenagers girls in the 1950s for their singularity in the context of the novels they habitually read. First because the heroine was the modern tomboy instead of ‘those models of feminine fragility’ as in M.Delly's novels, and although the story is told from the woman's viewpoint, the central character is a man – perhaps the only one in books for girls. Second, sex is central to the plot, contrary to the sexless books of M.Delly, or even Elinor Glyn's spiritualized form of sex.

There was no need for crude descriptions of sexual intercourse to justify the label of ‘forbidden books’ attached to Hull's work. The linguistic artifice used by the author suited much more the girl's fantasy. Rachel Anderson has reported that in *The Sheik* sex was suggested by passionate adverbs and the constant repetition of words such as crush, kiss, hot, fierce, fire, lips.

*In one dialogue between Diana and the Sheik, E. M. Hull finds no less than eleven different ways for them to speak emotionally. On a single page, Diana 'burst out passionately,' she choked furiously. Then she began desperately. He replied dryly. She gasped. He went on evenly. She whispered with dry lips. His answer was given carelessly. She whispered again, but jerkily this time. He continued sarcastically. She murmured faintly. When she has given up gasping desperately and learned to obey and love him, he express his love more gently.*<sup>114</sup>

However, the main difference between Hull's books and others lies not in sex but in the theme of abduction and rape – and the treatment given. The author suggests that the heroine is unconscious when first raped, thus, as in the best Victorian tradition, she is a passive sufferer. Soon she will be not only conscious but acquiescent, and the price of the

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<sup>111</sup> ANDERSON, 1974:184.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*:188.

<sup>113</sup> The desert novels scandalised her contemporaries – ironically D.H. Lawrence was one of the most infuriated – and labelled them pornographic. Billie Melman observes that what most irritated them “was not their prurience or ‘obscenity’ as such, but the fact that they were obscene novels for women.” For Lawrence: *Desert romance was pornographic literature, manufactured by female writers for the consumption of a sex-starved mass female audience*’ MELMAN, 1988:92.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*:188.

'corruption of her purity' will not be madness or death.<sup>115</sup> Instead, passion will flourish from her suffering, transforming the heroine into the willing victim. And more, although they marry at the end marriage is itself gratuitous in the plot. "At no point in the whole story is matrimony presented as a necessary alternative to an unlawful but happy concubinage."<sup>116</sup>

Finally those novels stressed racial stereotypes. The Sheik is not Arab<sup>117</sup> but the heir of an English peer and here an analogy can be made with Rice Burrough's *Tarzan* – another savage [but pure] character, also the heir of an English aristocrat family. The heroine's suspicions that the Sheik is not Arab derives from his scrupulous cleanliness, the shape and form of his hands. Physical uncleanness was associated with inner depravity and lasciviousness. For the heroine it becomes clear when she is kidnapped by a rival Sheik – a fat, dirty, lascivious man, who lived in a filthy and rough tent. He pays a high price for his boldness, for the Sheik seized hold of him round the throat and

*With the terrible smile always on his lips, [the Sheik] choked him slowly to death, till the dying man's body arched and writhed in his last agony, till blood burst from his nose and mouth pouring over the hands that held him like a vice.*<sup>118</sup>

Again violence was meant to stress the male's way of loving which presumes struggling against rivals to keep the beloved, plus masterfulness, domination and power. Enjoying sexual intercourse and not dying, was for sure only possible because the heroine was not relating to the uncivilised other. Instead, she was submitting to someone who was socially equal to her, and in spite of his violent behaviour and living in a savage environment had refined tastes and manners.

## *American Domestic Novels*

Louisa May Alcott's book belong to the tradition of the domestic novels from the nineteenth century. These novels were "written by, about and for women that depicted heroines demonstrating remarkable initiative in creating homes."<sup>119</sup> At the time they were written, they helped to enhance female self-confidence thus contributing to increase their social and political activism.

The 'Biblioteca das Moças' published two of Alcott's very popular books about the four daughters of the family March – '*Little Women*' and '*Good Wives*,<sup>120</sup> regarded as

<sup>115</sup> *Luciola* is an example of an analogous situation, in a Brazilian novel.

<sup>116</sup> MELMAN, 1988:102.

<sup>117</sup> It became a cliché of desert novels: the Sheikhs will always be French, English or Spanish but never Arab.

<sup>118</sup> In the Brazilian version the scene is on page 172.

<sup>119</sup> MATHEWS:11.

<sup>120</sup> Her other two books which relate the story of the March family [*Little Men* and *Jo's Boys*] were not published in this Brazilian collection, but by other publishers. '*Little Women*', had several successful editions in Portuguese, under the

classics of North American children's literature. The reason for the enormous success and the meanings of their message has been the object of an endless number of analyses,<sup>121</sup> and it is worth scrutinising them because of the success they also had among the Brazilian teenage readership. The analysis of the effect provoked on the readers of *'Little Women'* have also to consider its Technicolor film adaptation which was a huge success because of the arrival of young stars from Metro-Goldwin-Mayer:<sup>122</sup> Thus the vision of the [Brazilian] viewers/readers of the novel were built up with a mixture of Alcott's and Mervyn Leroy's own account of these girls.

These 'Little Women' were quite different characters and thus displayed different ways of achieving both the ideal womanly character and the definition of what was the proper woman's universe and work. Although Alcott's merit comes from picturing them so vividly, these characters could be decoded as stereotypes of feminine role, in Brazilian terms. Meg represents the dreams of upwardly mobility achieved through marriage, and fulfil the model of domesticity; Beth represents the zenith of an altercentered subject and is destined to become a spinster (actually she dies);<sup>123</sup> Amy wants to become an artist and makes every little effort to acquire the accomplishment of perfect ladyhood, by learning perfect manners and vocabulary; and tomboy Jo, the most cherished character of all, who regrets not being a man so that she could do everything she wanted without any restrictions — probably a fantasy of most of the readers. As her readers, she had been prepared to marry and become mother and wife, since it is the 'natural' woman's destiny, much to Jo's disgust.

And finally there was the handsome rich neighbour Laurie, the charming prince of all the girls' dreams. Jo and Laurie share the same interests, predilections and entertainment, she seemed his favourite partner, but at the end he marries Amy who as a lady is a more suitable partner.<sup>124</sup>

In the following books Alcott went further in drawing the characters of Amy and Jo by replicating both in two new figures: *'Naughty Nan'* and *'Little Bess.'*

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names *'Mulherzinhas'* [ a literal translation of Little Women), *'Quatro Irmãs'* (literary 'The Four Sisters') *'As Filhas da Família March'* ('The Family March's Daughters').

<sup>121</sup> For a recent bibliography about Louisa May Alcott and *Little Women* see MURPHY, 1990.

<sup>122</sup> Janet Leigh (Meg), June Allyson (Jo), Margaret O'Brien (Beth) and Elizabeth Taylor (Amy) played the four March sisters, Peter Lawford played Laurie and Rossano Brazzi performed his first Hollywood role as the Professor Baher. The 1948 film is the second Hollywood version of Louisa May Alcott's novel; it was directed by Mervyn Leroy and in Brazil was named *'Quatro Destinos'* (literally Four Destinies). The first version (1933) was directed by George Cukor and had Kathryn Hepburn as Jo and Joan Bennet as Marmee.

<sup>123</sup> Altercentrism take to its limit lead to the total annihilation of the self and the result could only be death. FETTERLEY, 1979.

<sup>124</sup> Actually it is Jo who refuses the marriage, but the solution is the one which fits best the social order of things.

Little Bess, nicknamed *Goldilocks*, embodies the ideal of the (future) beautiful woman, whose natural charms entitled her to reign over her male vassals. Invested with the Victorian ideology about the feminine spiritual virtues, she is the benevolent queen who only bequeaths goodness to her servants, making them become better persons. Louisa May Alcott exceeds in the description of the most beautiful young girl, justifying the effect it provoked in the boys:

*The boys regarded Goldilocks as a mixture of child, angel and fairy, for she was a lovely creature, and the golden hair which she inherited from her blonde mamma enveloped her like a shining veil, behind which she smiled upon her worshippers when gracious and hid herself when offended.*

In her description, the author praised ladylike virtues and reinforced the Victorian ideology – very much shared later by the Catholic authors of religious manuals – that the mere presence of a woman would transform men and the environment in which they lived. As the model woman “her rule was very gentle and her power was felt rather than seen.” Her ladylike ‘natural’ refinement made her “dainty in all things and had a good effect upon the careless lads about her.”

*She would let no one touch her roughly or with unclean hands, and more soap was used during her visits...Loud voices displeased her, and quarrelling frightened her; so gentle tones came into the boyish voices as they addressed her and squabbles were promptly suppressed in her presence... She liked to be waited on, and the biggest boys did her little errands without a murmur... [when she had to go away] they all missed her, and each dimly felt that he was better for having known a creature so lovely, delicate and sweet; for little Bess appealed to the chilvarous instinct in them as something to love, admire and protect with a tender sort of reverence.<sup>125</sup>*

‘*Naughty Nan*’ performed the destiny which Louisa May Alcott did not dare grant to Jo: a successful career and an option for spinsterhood as Alcott herself achieved.<sup>126</sup> The author could not hide her enthusiasm for ‘*Naughty Nan*’, described as ‘the pride of the community’. After depicting ‘*Goldilock Bessie*’ (with the same graceful ways and dainty tastes) and Daisy – Meg’s daughter – (sweet and domestic),<sup>127</sup> she waxed her lyrical over Nan:

*[She] was a handsome girl, with a fresh colour, clear eye, quick smile, and the self poised look young women with a purpose always have. She was simply and sensibly dressed, walked easily, and seemed full of vigour, with*

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<sup>125</sup> *Little men*:196, 197, 204.

<sup>126</sup> In spinsterhood, many Victorian women envisaged the only way to achieve self-realisation following a career. At a time when there was no other possible destiny available to a woman outside marriage and motherhood, voluntary spinsterhood sounded quite revolutionary as Louisa May Alcott synthesised in her own diary: “liberty is a better husband than love to many of us.” (Diary of Louisa May Alcott, February 14, 1868 quoted by CHAMBERS-SCHILLER, 1984.

<sup>127</sup> *Jo’s Boys*:9. Nan epitomised Real Womanhood in Cogan’s terms as opposed to the ideal of true womanhood, as analysed by Barbara Welter. (COGAN, 1989; WELTER, 1966.)

*her broad shoulders well back, arms swingly freely, and the elasticity of youth and health in every motion.*<sup>128</sup>

Like Jo, Nan had to make a choice between love and self-realisation, not admitting a way to reconcile job and marriage. When still a child Nan's opinion shocked the others: '*I don't want any family to fuss over. I shall have an office, with bottles and pestle things in it and drive round and cure folks.*'<sup>129</sup> The author made public her appreciation: "now, thanks to other intelligent women, colleges and hospitals were open to her [Nan]."<sup>130</sup>

In the characters of the second generation, Louisa Alcott pictured three aspects of women's role : the seductive object – Goldlocks Bessie, and the altercentered subject – in two ways of accomplishing this ideal: the domestic Daisy and the professional woman in caring jobs – Nan. These novels also showed how women could have a particular way of securing power and rule over men in spite of their subordinated position in society.<sup>131</sup>

## *Modern American Novels*

In the 1950s, modern American novels became popular chiefly through the books of the *Coleção Rosa*.<sup>132</sup> They had contemporary plots and in a way replicated the atmosphere introduced by the American movies. They pictured the middle-class life style in the small American towns or the problems brought by the exigencies of modern life, such as the conjugal conflicts provoked by married woman in paid work, seen as "problematic for male honour."<sup>133</sup>

One of the most popular novels of this series was Alice Rogers Hager's<sup>134</sup> '*Janice, a Aeromoça*' whose plot was the life of air stewardesses – regarded by middle class teenagers as a modern fascinating career, but considered dangerous for moral reputation for the free life-style it allowed. Thus, those novels were important for fulfilling fantasies about modernity, forming the necessary counterpoint to the nostalgia of others whose aristocratic environment led the readers to an idealised past.

<sup>128</sup> *Jo's Boys*:10.

<sup>129</sup> *Jo's Boys*: 10.

<sup>130</sup> However, as far as in the 1960 medicine as a feminine career was still regarded with reservation by parents. They feared that girls could lose innocence, thus becoming not so much a marriageable type.

<sup>131</sup> See chapter 3.

<sup>132</sup> Among the 'modern' American novels, this collection also published a few German authors (Eugene Marlitt; Courts Mahler) whose books echoed the same universe of M.Delly's novels. American authors of light novels were also included in the *Biblioteca das Moças* (Margaret G. Nichols, Carol Gaye among others).

<sup>133</sup> Frances Sarah Moore '*Obligatto*.'

<sup>134</sup> An author introduced to the readers as '*expert in novels about matters of aviation*.' Several books intended to be more modern had the dangers and wonders of flying as their plot, or pilots as their heroes e.g. Berta Ruck's *A Esposa Que Não Foi Beijada* [The Unkissed Woman,] *O Grande Dilema* [The Leap Year Romance] Florence L. Barclay's *Jardim Fechado* [Through the Postern Gate]. Elinor Glyn's '*O Grande momento*' [The Great Moment].

It is interesting to note that modern novels inserted information about fashion, home decoration, good manners, proper behaviour or conjugal relationship. These information in the narrative reinforced the publicity of new products and the matters of women's magazines.

### *The Daily Life of Young Ordinary Couples*

Rose Franken's series around Claudia<sup>135</sup> (*Claudia, Claudia and David, The Marriage of Claudia, Another Claudia*) best typified the model life style of modern young wives. These books were introduced in Brazil as

*novels focused on the ordinary daily life of a typical American couple today. Whilst the plot of the majority of novels is based on sensational and dramatic facts, these novels about Claudia are exactly the opposite.*<sup>136</sup>

However, for Marjorie Rosen, Claudia was a kind of precursor of "a scrubbed kind of heroine, one without pretence, without maturity,"<sup>137</sup> which would people Hollywood films in the 1950s, and were copied by Brazilian teenage girls. These characters were pictured by stars such as Jane Powell, June Allyson, Debbie Reynolds who played the 'girl-next-door type, the Hollywood version of the Brazilian 'garotas de família'.<sup>138</sup>

Claudia is pictured as the ordinary middle-class housewife, with a good servant who did everything at Claudia's home – even rearing her children. Claudia was charming, good humoured and totally ignorant of 'serious matters'– such as dealing with money,<sup>139</sup> tax,<sup>140</sup> politics,<sup>141</sup> or intellectual subjects.<sup>142</sup> She was treated as a grown up child both by her mother and by her husband. And it was not merely rhetorical:

*[Claudia] was eternally grateful that David...had upon a memorable occasion, deliberately turned her over his knee and spanked her. He was strong as an ox and all her kicking and squirming and biting had made no*

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<sup>135</sup> It was filmed with Dorothy McGuire "as the frazzled and helplessly infantile wife" of Robert Young. ROSEN, 1975: 240.] There is no reference that this film had been exhibited in Brazil

<sup>136</sup> Rose Franken ( 1895- ) Advertisement on the back cover of books from the Biblioteca das Moças . The author also put the matter when speaking about the best sellers the heroine was reading - "She wished petulantly, that somebody would write a plain story about ordinary people like herself, with as little description as possible, and a lot of everyday conversation. " *Claudia*: 33.

<sup>137</sup> ROSEN, 1975: 241.

<sup>138</sup> See Chapter 2 of this thesis.

<sup>139</sup> "She could see that he meant business, so she sat down. A great sleepiness overwhelmed her. She yawned in her throat..." *Claudia*: 78.

<sup>140</sup> " People who take income tax seriously make me sick. Why don't you ignore the whole thing for once and see what happens...How grown men can be so scared of a little tax. " *Claudia*: 76.

<sup>141</sup> "She made every effort to get upset over [the war]but for all her painstaking application to the world's pandemonium, she could not completely down the conviction that the crystallised essence of life and reality lay in the loving of two people and the building of a home." *Claudia*: 8.

<sup>142</sup> "Claudia had the sort of brain that couldn't cope with anything the least bit educational. " *Claudia*: 8.

novels represented a kind of romanticised directory of prescribed behaviour for wives. They were similar to the advice of agony columns and advertisements for beauty products, marking a shift in the representations of what a woman's role in marriage should be.<sup>149</sup>

Rose Franken's novels anticipated an issue whose discussion would be spread by women's magazines in the 1960s<sup>150</sup> – the eroticization of marriage<sup>151</sup> which would add one more responsibility for wives: their role in the husband's sexual fulfilment in marriage. For a long time, wives were only supposed to be the husband's partners in biological procreation, besides being good housewives and perfect mothers. From the late 1950s on, women in mass media discourse were not only supposed to share their husbands' sexual pleasure, but they were also to be responsible for it. In the universe of mass media, sex was not an exclusive matter for the sexy Hollywood bad-woman and pin-up-girls anymore, but become an issue for plain housewives. Thus, housewives add one more issue in their worries and anguish, as it was revealed in the agony columns of magazines. However, as Maria Moraes has explained, magazines with a stress on appearances epitomised by 'nice night-gowns,' helped to build a kind of 'petty eroticism,'<sup>152</sup> whose emphasis was not on woman's sexual fulfilment but rather on man's happiness as the strategy to maintain a marriage. This scene in *Claudia and David* exemplifies this point: Claudia's husband had '*obliquely*' stated that marriages would be better

*[I]f there were more wives and less ladies... [who refused to sleep on double beds]'. Starting off with those sentiments, there was every reason [for Claudia] to believe that the winter was going to be a wonderful experience, a complete reconditioning of their marriage, so to speak'.<sup>153</sup>*

This new discourse also obfuscated a traditional triangular representation of women's role in the male's imaginary – the mother, the virgin and the prostitute.<sup>154</sup> As Da Matta has pointed out, in the role of Virgin-Mother (embodied in the Wife) woman places her reproductive power above sexual pleasure – investing this sphere with spiritual

<sup>148</sup> For instance: "Always it was she who sat on the edge of the tub, while David snuffled his face into water and combed his hair. There with the door closed against the world of household, this moment had come to be the sweet crowning of the day." (*Claudia and David*: 96).

<sup>149</sup> This also included discussions about "nice, lacy night-gowns." – an issue supposed to be of capital importance for married life. However such importance is put into question when the author describes a mature lady as "the kind of plain-looking woman who was lacy and complicated underneath" (ibid. p 50) but "looked as if she took a hot-water bag to bed with her every night. She was eternally chilly" (p 35) – an argument to justify her husband's flirting with the heroine. Both quotations are from *Claudia and David*. See also chapter 7 of this thesis.

<sup>150</sup> Coincidentally, the name of the first women's magazine which discussed these issues was *Claudia*. It was also the first to introduce the question of 'the problem which had no name' in an article named 'The Poor Sad Queen [of Home]'. These discussions gave it the label of the 'first modern women's magazine' Brazil.

<sup>151</sup> See chapter 7 of this thesis.

<sup>152</sup> MORAES, 1979.

<sup>153</sup> *Claudia and David*: 33

<sup>154</sup> See chapter 6 of this thesis.

*impression on him. The unfair part of it was that all she'd done was to go downtown to buy some aluminium pots at a sale... When [her mother] heard about the spanking she was delighted. Secretly Claudia was delighted too. It was pleasant to be married to an architect and a cave man combined.*<sup>143</sup>

She was treated as someone incapable of taking any responsibility for herself – David “didn’t like the thought of her starting out alone on the long uncertain journey into motherhood. He would have gladly had the baby for her, and so would her mother.”<sup>144</sup>

In Rose Franken’s novels sex was no longer hidden from the readers as it had been in M.Delly’s, nor referred to only by allusions, or elevated to the divine dimension as in Elinor Glyn and Florence Barclay. Instead, it is part of the daily life of young couples, and an important component of love. This is the first paragraph of the novel *Claudia*:

*It had been a beautiful night and she loved him more than ever in the morning. “If it weren’t real love,” David told her, “if it were only physical, it wouldn’t be that way.”*<sup>145</sup>

But in the best tradition of the manuals of sex education written by religious authors, in matters of sex – more than in any other – man took the lead, as the holder of the knowledge and experience:

*Claudia...had the greatest respect for her husband's superior knowledge of sex. Not that he'd ever led a wild life or run around, but he'd read a great many books on the subject and knew as much as a doctor.*<sup>146</sup>

Similarly:

*[A] honeymoon was not a bed of roses, as was commonly supposed. It made her blood run cold to think of having one with anyone else but David, who was darling as could be and behaved practically like her father.*<sup>147</sup>

Their intimacy is presented to the readers as built up from small habits and gestures designed to preserve a space and a time only for them.<sup>148</sup> These scenes in this series of

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<sup>143</sup> *Claudia*: 48.

<sup>144</sup> *Claudia*: 27. Her naïveté is replicated in several films of the 1950s – considered by Marjorie Rosen as the decade of the exaltation of matrimony. It must be remembered that a strong emphasis was placed on domesticity on the post war years as part of returning to normality – and it meant the reinforcement of the traditional pattern of the family. Thus society decreed that the female’s supreme goal was suburban life and all its apparatus (“Mom’s doing for the children as part of her own familial ecstasy”). Rosen considers that the more popular films of the decade are centred on women and can be listed under these labels ‘*Women Fixing to Catch Their Men*’, ‘*Women Preparing for the Wedding*’, ‘*Slovenly Wives*’, ‘*Discontented Wives*’, ‘*Divorcing Wives*’, ‘*Battling Wives*’, ‘*Romancing Widows*’. ROSEN, 1975: 246- 247. At the same time, the ‘most socially ambitious cinematic probes of the decade, the films which will be remembered the longest are totally devoid of females....or had virtually exiled women to minor roles. ROSEN, 1975: 250.

<sup>145</sup> *Claudia*: 7.

<sup>146</sup> *Claudia*, *Ibid.*: 7.

<sup>147</sup> *Claudia*, *Ibid.*: 26.



reverence and respect, whilst as a prostitute, she places sexuality above reproduction.<sup>155</sup> The 'eroticization' of marriage challenged this traditional viewpoint,<sup>156</sup> as *Claudia* remarked

*' It gave her a little shock to realise that she was lying next to a man who wasn't even a blood-relation, and she thought how delightfully illegal a marriage could be. Being perpetually immoral was probably the whole secret of a happy union. '*<sup>157</sup>

Claudia and David are presented as the model of the modern young happy couple. However, in terms of gender roles they repeat the traditional pattern, rooted in common-sense prejudices, which reserved the domestic domain for women, and limited woman's expertise, knowledge and interests to the home. Women do not need to have intellectual skills since they do not value these issues at all. There are some areas that are of men's exclusive competence – such as money, career, income tax, politics, mechanics. In spite of Claudia driving a car – a sign of modernity – “everything about a woman driver irritated him [David]...Secretly Claudia despised women drivers, too.” Thus the model of modernity presented to readers only restated the same old fashioned viewpoint about woman and her role in society.<sup>158</sup>

## *Women's Magazines*

In the 1950s the women's magazines whose stress was in romantic love multiplied. First as 'photo-novels' imported from Italy, with more traditional ambience and plots;<sup>159</sup> followed by short-stories imported from the U.S. – this was the case of *Contos de Amor* and *Querida*.<sup>160</sup>

In *Contos de Amor*, heroes and heroines were young, charming, had fashionable jobs, attended cocktail parties, drove speedy cars. Men were usually rich. at the end she marries the heroine. The heroine was always very beautiful, not necessarily rich, and good

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<sup>155</sup> DAMATTA, 1979:111. Contrary to this opinion of the author: *it seems a paradox to call the whore, who places sexual pleasure above reproduction 'mulher da vida' one of the popular synonyms of prostitute* (literally, a woman of life), *which makes the mother by contrast a woman of death*. In his comments the author forgets that the original expression was the old fashioned *mulher de vida airada* which means a woman of loose life style. It connotes freedom as opposed to restrain rather than sex as opposed to reproduction. *Mulher da vida* could also be the short form of another expression: *mulher de vida facil* (woman of easy life style). In this case the connotation is the supposed lack of efforts to earn a life, by contrast to the daily burdens of mother/housewife.

<sup>156</sup> See chapter 6 of this thesis.

<sup>157</sup> *Claudia and David*: 110

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*: 83.

<sup>159</sup> This was the case of *Grande Hotel* the magazine that launched photo-novels in Brazil, first publishing them as serials; and *Capricho* - the first to publish a whole story on each issue.

<sup>160</sup> *Love Tales* and *Darling*, respectively.

character: she was friendly, compassionate, honest.<sup>161</sup> The ambience of these short-stories echoed 1950s Hollywood films. Although *Contos de Amor* did not have special sections about fashion or home decoration, minor information about these issues were given in the stories: the heroine choose a dress of a certain colour because it heightened her hair, her eyes, or her complexion. She brushed her hair a hundred times before going to bed and never forgot to remove her make-up.<sup>162</sup> Her attires were always described in detail, as was the way the heroine arranges the table, or the decoration of her house.

*Querida* was directed to a more adult public. It was a glossy magazine, and in comparison with the others, it had more sophisticated sections on home decoration, cooking, fashion and reports about fashionable Brazilian figures. Instead of copying foreign fashion it had its own fashion designer who created sophisticated dresses using Brazilian cotton – until then considered a plain fabric, only used by the lower classes or for home wear. Instead, the magazine displayed sophisticated bridal or ballroom dresses worn by fashionable people, and fancy dresses for those Hollywood stars officially invited to the Brazilian carnival, all of them made of cotton.

Later the magazine also innovated its cooking section. The majority of magazines just translated foreign recipes, as they did with other issues bought from international agencies.<sup>163</sup> The journalist responsible for this section in *Querida* was already famous for her column in the newspaper *O Globo*, from the same publisher. Her very elaborate recipes demanded new products already available on the market, and popularised among a middle-class public fashionable and more sophisticated dishes.

In marked contrast to such sophistication, the short-stories – the main attraction of the magazine – were located among the American lower-classes: workers in plants or garages, small farmers, shop-keepers. Coincidentally the majority of the heroes did hard work, in tasks that made them sweat, exhibiting muscles, dirty hands and filthy clothes. They were rough, sometimes sensitive, but could also be drunken and violent men. The heroines were far from the models of romantic novels. They could be single parents, wearied housewives – many times married with quite older, or ill husbands – or young woman working in insignificant jobs, daydreaming about the sophisticated life in big cities. In general they lived in harsh conditions having problems with money, facing huge hospital bills for which they have no means to pay. They committed adultery, betrayed friends, lived 'torrid love scenes', put at risk the life of their children, or relatives. They were frequently

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<sup>161</sup> It is important to note the difference between the features of the good character heroine in M Delly's terms - religious and morally strict standards according to Catholic doctrine - and in these 'modern' sentimental short stories.

<sup>162</sup> Mandatory advice about beauty care in magazines and advertisements.

<sup>163</sup> Another exception was *O Cruzeiro*, which had Helena Sangirardi a famous traditional writer of cooking books as responsible for its section. When *Manchete* was launched in 1952, she left *O Cruzeiro* to introduce a more dynamic culinary page, with photos showing the steps of the recipe, in the new magazine.

pictured as envious, vain or jealous women. Or, by contrast, they could be the suffering victim of rough, brutal husbands, or parents; or of the prejudices of their hometown population, or the 'victims of the errors of her own past'. These novels were illustrated with meaningful photographs (instead of the drawings of the others), showing plain women and rough men in ordinary location.

However, in spite of displaying the circumstances which were responsible for women's defects, or faults – regarded as justifications – the transgression of conventional behaviour always brought stiff penalties, deep sufferings which made these women always profoundly guilty – even when they actually were the victims. In reality, there were always attenuating circumstances to justify all the men's faults – such as drunkenness or violence – for the plain fact that they are man. These heroines always reached the end of the story either as repentant women, or as the comprehensive and patient wife who is bound to forgive and help her husband to surpass his vices or defects. Thus the transgressing pattern of these short-stories was as conservative as that of the sugary romantic novels. Nevertheless, for the young women, they were the equivalent of Elinor Glyn's and E.M.Hull's novels, consumed as 'forbidden fruits', hidden from the parents.<sup>164</sup>

The specialised magazines *Cinelândia* and *Revista do Rádio* were widely read by the feminine public and paradoxically both had a stress on domesticity.<sup>165</sup> *Cinelândia* provides a good example of the adaptations made in foreign reports to better suit a Brazilian readership. That magazine had the life and gossips about Hollywood stars as its main theme. In spite of the 'scandalous' news about divorce and successive re-marriages, *Cinelândia* managed to present their lives so as not shock its readership. Family provided the central structure which allowed the fans to feel artists were like them, busied with home, family and children.<sup>166</sup>

The same Brazilian dichotomy between the '*garotas de família*' and '*as outras*' was translated into two new categories: 'the nice girls'<sup>167</sup> and 'the pin-up girls.'<sup>168</sup> The 'others' in Hollywood terms were to be seen as part of the fantasy, rather than as models for readers' everyday behaviour. *Cinelândia* lamented the 'loose stars' of Hollywood: those who seemed to possess everything and have nothing. They seemed to be victorious and feel frustrated.

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<sup>164</sup> Questions about the contrasts in this magazine - sophistication and luxury vs. ordinariness - and even the representations about the lower-class life style are beyond the scope of this thesis.

<sup>165</sup> The Brazilian *Revista do Rádio* had the radio stars' house as the favourite set for its reports. See chapter 10 of this thesis.

<sup>166</sup> A paradox that can be thought as that one surrounding the Royal Family in England, as analysed by Judith Williamson. However, as the author points out there is a major difference between the Royals and any other celebrity. Unlike those who had to do something to become famous, the Royals are famous by a mere accident of birth. They do not need to do, just to be. WILLIAMSON, 1985: 75.

<sup>167</sup> Such as Doris Day, Debra Paget, Pier Angeli, Debbie Reynolds.

<sup>168</sup> Such as Jane Russell, Mamie Van Doren and Marilyn Monroe - the undisputed sex symbol of the 1950s.

They looked for peace and only found suffering.<sup>169</sup> These warnings echoed of the advice of religious manuals against the sophism of woman's career and success beyond the domestic moral patterns.

*Cinelândia* showed its readers that the nice girls "were just folks" whose life style was exactly the same as that of any teenager,<sup>170</sup> with moral standards that could be read as similar to the Brazilian ones.<sup>171</sup> Soon after her marriage, *Cinelândia* warned Natalie Wood (and the readers): You will be a good wife ... if you start to act as grown-up woman and not as 'daddy-little daughter;' if you keep a strict budget and start to behave as his real wife, instead of playing to the role of dear 'girl friend.'<sup>172</sup>

And if anyone could dream about being a star's girl-friend, *Cinelândia* would explain that the young male stars preferred tough girls to 'easy' ones; they liked girls who knew how to behave; they agreed that a man's behaviour was dictated by the girls:<sup>173</sup> It is perfectly possible for a girl to make herself respected without being rude or less feminine," in the best style of any religious manual.

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<sup>169</sup> *Cinelândia* 7 (146) 14 Dec. 1958.

<sup>170</sup> Debbie Reynolds was the leader of the local Girl Guide Group; Terry Moore though sexy, was a devout Mormon and a good girl. Farley Granger asks 'Are you prepared to marriage?' (*Cinelândia* 1 (3) Jul. 1952); Vera Ellen enlighten: *How to be the more popular girl in town*, ('ibid. 2 (13) May 1953); Janet Leigh tells the readers 'How I'm going to educate my child.' ('ibid. 5 (93) Set. 1956). June Haver exhibit 'Romantic Aprons,' ('ibid. 2 (10) Feb. 1953).

<sup>171</sup> Dating and 'namoro' were different realities. About dating, see Beth Bailey, *From the Front Porch to the Back Seat. Courtship in the 20th Century America*; and 'Rebels Without a Cause ? Teenagers in the 50s.' in *History Today*, 40.

<sup>172</sup> 'Você Será Uma Boa Esposa Se....' ibid. 7 (128) Mar 1958.

<sup>173</sup> Sal Mineo echoed the religious manuals as he warned the girls: 'there is nothing worse than an 'easy girl'. The difficult things are tastier. Sometimes a 'no' could bind more than a 'yes'. I am not saying that kissing is wrong or to be condemned. But don't you think, it is going a bit too fast to kiss the girl on their very first date? [Sal Mineo - Conselho às Garotas', *Cinelândia* 6 (110): 78-81, June 1957]. Tony Perkins agreed: *Generally, the behaviour of the man depends entirely on the way the girl acts. If she 'eases', he takes advantages of it. If she behaves, he does not go ahead. As far as I am concerned, there is nothing wrong in a good-night kiss, provided it is a proof of tenderness. Be careful, girls, if your Romeo is an ardent Latin lover: in this case you must avoid long chats on the sofa and farewells inside the car.* [Nós 4 e as Garotas,' *Cinelândia* 7 (135):51-55]. Advising how 'to tame a 'bad wolf' Dolores Hart warns the girls: *You must always keep a severe dignity to show that you are not an easy girl.* ['Como Domar um Lobo,' *Cinelândia* 7 (135):44- 49, 56].

## Chapter 6

### *Women In Masculine Imaginary*

It is not possible to interpret the construction of the feminine self without understanding the male imaginary. This chapter will examine the feminine stereotypes under a masculine gaze – the ideal woman who is represented as tripartite in the roles of virgin, wife, and whore. Sexuality is the issue at the root of this divided representation – repressed for the virgin; controlled for the wife; unrestrained for the whore. The wife's sexuality is legitimated and finds its justification in motherhood, which is romanticised and mystified. Motherhood is sublime, divine, and the wife who is 'the mother of my children' must, therefore, receive the utmost respect and consideration. The same respect is due to the single girl, the virgin who is called 'a family girl.' She also deserves a higher reverence because she is a wife/ mother-to-be, in whose hands rests the future of the Nation, the best values of society, the goodness of religion and spirituality. Even the most philandering man liked to say that he respected a 'family's girl.'

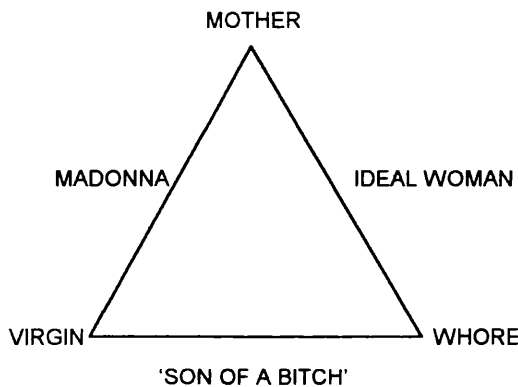
However, there is also a counter-male discourse represented by cartoons and pornographic comics – where the hero deals not only with prostitutes but with sexually unsatisfied wives, or sexually curious virgins. This material problematises representations of woman or the vision of the idealist official discourse about honour. So, the analysis of these comics shows a more complex image of the feminine role which puts in check the basic dichotomy between the expected behaviour of a rightful woman and its inverse. This is the domain where the sacred figure of woman is turned upside down. Humour provides a safe ground for such inversion because it “derives from that which cannot be anticipated: it is unexpected, discontinuous, and fleeting.”<sup>1</sup> Thus, laughter is provoked by the breaking down of standards, norms and rules. However, this does not mean that this kind of humour operated as a corrosive element in social structure, contributing to its radical change. Instead, it operates as an element of catharsis: laughing and fantasies contributed to alleviate the pressures, provoking the reinforcement of social structure.

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<sup>1</sup> NEVES, 1979:52.

## Woman's Role In Brazilian Middle-Class Imaginary

Roberto DaMatta presents a triangular model to represent woman in the Brazilian imaginary: <sup>2</sup>the virgin, the mother and the whore. As for this author, what matters are not the facts but the relation between them, the combination of these categories creates three important figures in our imaginary<sup>3</sup>:



a) the Virgin Mother, the Madonna. The most positive model for the feminine role. An unattainable ideal; b) the Whore Mother. The most negative form of the feminine role. From it results the most infamous condition, the '*filho da puta*', literally 'the son of a whore', or 'the son of a bitch;'<sup>c)</sup> The Virgin Whore<sup>4</sup> – For DaMatta this is the ideal woman for every man: '*a virgin for the others, a whore just for me.*'<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> I am aware that one could only speak about 'imaginaries' in the plural, taking in consideration variables such as social class and regionalisms. As expressed here, it means that the representations of a class (the middle-classes) are being ideologically projected over the others. However, DaMatta takes for granted that this model is hegemonic for the whole Brazilian society. Notwithstanding these problems, it provides a good model with which to think about gender roles.

<sup>3</sup> This model by Roberto DaMatta was presented in a seminar at the University of Paraná at the beginning of the 1980s. In an earlier book (DAMATTA, 1978:110-111) he analyses woman in Carnival as an opposition of the roles Virgin/Mother and Whore, without taking the poles as part of a relational universe, a theme that he is using to explain the particularities of Brazilian culture. The idea of relational triangles in a different way from the one used in this thesis is used by him to analyse woman's role in Jorge Amado's novel *D. Flor e Seus Dois Maridos* (DAMATTA, 1985: 81-112; also in *Social Science Information*). In an earlier article, sociologist Manuel Berlinck proposed another triangular model for the feminine images in Brazilian popular music- the domestic, the "*piranha*" (a slang for the whore which stress her dangerous character) and the oniric, idealised woman. BERLINCK, 1976. For Ruben Oliven, this 'domestic' woman in popular music is confounded with the oniric one, since she is perfect and belongs to an idealised past. OLIVEN 1987.

<sup>4</sup> This model is well exemplified taking up *Luciola's* career in José de Alencar's novel, of the same name: Lucia, a young *virgin* girl after being seduced by her uncle changes her name to Luciola and becomes the most beautiful and depraved courtesan, a *whore*, from Rio. Nonetheless, she is still pure in heart, for she had kept a virginity of the soul. She is like '*the Lily in the Swamp*' – a very popular image in romantic novels. She only needed true love to reveal it. When she started her affair with Paulo, she decided to live just for him and for many months, Paulo had the ideal woman – '*the virgin whore*'.

When she became pregnant, she decided to start a new life as a preparation for becoming a *mother*. But she realises that no matter what she does, her past has already condemned her son to be the most infamous kind of person – *the son of a bitch*. She also realises that love for her will always be tainted by her previous life. So she decides to live in chastity forever, in spite of their great love. Symbolically, she is trying to become a *virgin* again. This would restore her honour, which is impossible since 'a crushed glass cannot be made perfect again'. And more, it would make her a *virgin mother*, that is the most unattainable ideal for there was just one, the Madonna. There is no other way but death left to her. The story of the poor girl who is seduced when in desperate need of money always on behalf of someone in her family is a very common plot. See Carlos Zéfiro, 'Boas Entradas', in MARINHO, 1983:77-93.

<sup>5</sup> It is open to doubt whether this representation is consistent for the 1950s.

Although this is a triangular model the three vertices are not opposed in the same way. The Virgin and the Mother can be seen as the two faces of the same phenomenon, both strongly opposed to the whore. Those are in the dominion of the pure, sacred, order, law. By contrast, the whore represents the impure, disorder, the outlaw.<sup>6</sup>

Indeed, in the Brazilian 1950s, the dichotomy between 'The mother of my children', and 'the others', was quite visible. Sex in marriage was intended for procreation, and was therefore a duty, not a pleasure. For pleasure men had 'the others' that were just objects of consumption, like other male enjoyments such as gambling, food, drink or male sports.

Taking Jorge Amado's novels as examples it is not a coincidence that D. Flor and Gabriela, both very sensual women, were also good cooks.<sup>7</sup> D. Flor even had a school of cookery, named *Sabor e Arte* ('Flavour and Art'), that makes a meaningful pun – it is pronounced as *saborear-te*, that means 'to savour you'. In men's vocabulary, *comer* (to eat) is a popular way of referring to sexual intercourse, and has a strong active, masculine connotation: Men eat women (or homosexual men), which is represented as an active role, whilst women (or homosexual men) are eaten by men, a passive role.<sup>8</sup> Gender in Brazil is perceived through this structuring opposition between activity and passivity.<sup>9</sup> To activity are attached male positive connotations of power, strength, aggressiveness, independence, authority,<sup>10</sup> pleasure whilst to passivity are connected feminine representations of dependence, fragility, pain. Maleness is

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<sup>6</sup> DAMATTA 1978: 110-111.

<sup>7</sup> In her analysis of Jorge Amado's *Gabriela Clove and Cinnamon*, Ilana Strozenberg points out that it is common to men refer to women as '*gostosa*', that means savoury, tasty. For her it is a noun only given to '*the others*', but never to the wife, what would be regarded as a lack of respect. In *Gabriela*, men referred twice to Risoleta, one of the prostitutes in the brothel as "a hot little dish It gives to prostitutes a metaphorical relationship with food, unlike the 'women of the family' (wife, daughters and other relatives) who had a metonymical one, since they are the cooks or responsible for cooking. STROZENBERG, 1983. To say that the adjective '*gostosa*' does not apply to the wife is a dogmatic affirmation which would need further research to be fully confirmed. Likewise *Gostosão* (the masculine augmentative form of *gostosa*) is used to label man who demands a lot without doing anything to deserve it, such as working. It is a pejorative label. I could not confirm my hypothesis, but I believe that in the 1950s, it had a positive connotation analogous to '*gostosa*'.

<sup>8</sup> Roberto DaMatta points out that in Brazil male's sexual language is full of culinary metaphors, where tastes and smells are basic. According to him to eat in English is also used in a sexual meaning, but it refers only to oral sex. By contrast, in Brazil, it concerns sexual intercourse as a whole, and is identified with penetration. DAMATTA, 1983

<sup>9</sup> For a analysis of it, see MISSE, 1979; FRY, 1982; PARKER, 1991; HEILBORN, 1992; DAMATTA, 1993: 77 (footnote 22);.

<sup>10</sup> In spite of the general male image of activity, potency, domination, a contrasting one is pictured in the rhymes of the 1950 *samba*, mainly in the so-called *dor-de-cotovelo* music [literally 'pain-in-the -elbow,' a Brazilian expression for envy, contempt]. For long, the majority of composers were men, so their rhymes also provides a good account of male representations about woman, as Ruben Oliven pointed out: *The MPB [popular Brazilian music] is one of the few cases where man speaks freely about his feeling in relation to woman. Whilst in other public discourses man pictures himself as strong, and in a superior position; in the rhymes of samba, he confesses his anguish and fear, weakness and pain, his desire. Frequently he creates an image of a fragile, unguarded person, who suffered a great loss.*

associated with penetration and femaleness with reception.<sup>11</sup> Marcel Misse,<sup>12</sup> who studied the popular vocabulary of sexual intercourse and homosexuality in Brazil, concluded that the sexual stigma carried in the terms referring to both – woman and homosexual man – came from what is regarded as the 'passivity' of their role during copulation.<sup>13</sup> Thus, from the 'grammar of intercourse'<sup>14</sup> derives a rich popular vocabulary, not only to nominate aspects fundamentally linked to intercourse and male and female genitals, but also to describe situations or persons where there are implicit active positive ideas of success, courage, confidence, power or passive negative ones of dependence, cowardice, untrustworthiness.<sup>15</sup>

In his analysis about the vocabulary of sex, Richard Parker<sup>16</sup> rightly observes the connotation of violence and aggressiveness implicit in the synonyms for male genitals, and [questionable] of failure and incompleteness in the female ones.<sup>17</sup> An example of such connotation of deficiency is the current word *xoxota* whose origin Parker ventures to be the almost unknown verb *chochar* [to dry].<sup>18</sup> Possibly he had in mind its linked and current word *chocho* that is used to qualify insipid or tasteless<sup>19</sup> fruits and foods and, by extension, persons and things considered inexpressive, or without attraction. If there is any further linkage besides homophony between *chocho* and *xoxota*, then, the word more freely used by and with children is the one that connotes a total lack of attraction and importance – a support for the repression which surrounds the issue.

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<sup>11</sup> It explains why only the 'passive' male is popularly considered homosexual. For an analysis of active and passive roles in male homosexual vocabulary see FRY, 1982. According to HEILBORN, 1992: 309, such polarity which generally conforms to the male homosexual couples is inexpressive for the lesbian ones.

<sup>12</sup> MISSE, 1979.

<sup>13</sup> In common sense, the one who is penetrated is the only one considered homosexual. The other is considered 'a very macho man', one who does not lose any chance for having a sexual relationship. See chapter 5 of this thesis.

<sup>14</sup> HEILBORN, 1992:298.

<sup>15</sup> For instance the positive expressions: *estar por cima* (to be on the top of something or someone = success), *fechar* (to close = to succeed), *jantar* (to dinner, = to win); *meter o ferro* (literally, to introduce the iron tool) = to inflict some sort of losses upon someone; *meter o cacete*, *meter o pau* (to introduce the stick) = to reveal bad things about something or someone; *dar porrada* = to aggressively beat. The negatives: *estar por baixo* (to be bellow = failure); *abrir*, *abrir as pernas* (to open, to separate the legs = to be coward, to reveal a secret, to be subservient) . For an analysis of such expressions see MISSE, 1979 and also PARKER, 1991. It is important to note that these ideas are frequently linked to the ideology of favour: *estar por cima* frequently means to have a close friend in a high position in the government. The inverse *estar por baixo* means to loose political power, for not having friends in high positions anymore.

<sup>16</sup> PARKER, 1991: 67.

<sup>17</sup> E.g. *greta* (split); *racha* (crack) which Parker considers as examples of deficiency, can also been interpreted as descriptive words, generally used without abusive connotation. However, these words assumed a derogate meaning when offensively used to label women in male homosexual groups. (as related by MCRAE, oral communication, UNICAMP, 1983).

<sup>18</sup> Paradoxically the other commonly used word *perereca* (small tree-frog) connotes viscosity, coldness.

<sup>19</sup> The Aurelio's dictionary does not make any linkage between the words *chocho* and *xoxota*.



## *Men's Role in Brazilian Imaginary*

Brazil can be included among those countries where ' great emphasis is placed on women's chastity and where male's honour is dependent on the straightforward behaviour of the women's of his family. As it has been analysed in chapter 2, woman's reputation is a family's valuable good, and when tainted it brings opprobrium for everyone — suspicion about the behaviour of all the other women, and shame for the men who regard it as a kind of failure in their maleness. To watch over woman's behaviour was a duty of the male part of the family. But the worst stigma falls over the husband. As in several Mediterranean societies,<sup>20</sup> in the Brazilian code of honour, horns are associated with feminine adultery and a 'cuckold' is called '*como*, '*chifrudo*', '*guampudo*' (horned).<sup>21</sup>

This does not mean that there is no strong link between men's honour and woman's behaviour. For some groups, female adultery is regarded as a strong enough reason to kill. So strong is the husband stigma, that for long the claim that such taint could only be cleaned with blood was widely accepted.<sup>22</sup> In the legal viewpoint the killing of the adulterous wife was a kind of self defence in a 'crime against the honour.'<sup>23</sup>

The reason why this stigma is associated to horns 'blowing' in one's forehead remains open to speculation. For Brazilian urban middle class these terms do not allude to the horns of any specific animal as indicated by some periphrastic ways of referring to this fact: One could say about a man that "he has much branches (*galhos*) in his head." This is decoded as 'deer's horns', (in Portuguese, *veado galheiro*), the animal that has the largest and most prominent ones. Even though the deer (*veado*) is commonly associated with male homosexuality,<sup>24</sup> it is not regarded as a way of reinforcing the cuckold's stigma with such a suspicion, but rather a way of exaggerating it, implying that it had happened so often that he began to look like the deer.

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<sup>20</sup> Such as PERISTIANY, 1965; PITT-RIVERS, 1965; BLOK, 1981.

<sup>21</sup> PITT-RIVERS, 1965:46; BLOK, 1981:430.

<sup>22</sup> Only in the 1980s, after several feminist campaigns these man started to be regarded as nothing more than murders. And the once repetead (and widely accepted) claims that so much love and jeaulousy they had for the wife had made them lost their senses motivated the successful feminist slogan — The one who loves, do not kill!

<sup>23</sup> Actually in the judgement of these crimes gender roles was the issue in question: men doing what was expected from a straightforward man against women who failed in fulfil the expected feminine role. See CORREA, 1983.

<sup>24</sup> In Brazil, male homosexuals are usually called '*veado*' (deer). This is one of the more common forms of popular insult them. The association between the two is very strong. So that, as in a kind of popular lottery called '*Jogo do Bicho*' (literally 'Animal Game'), the number 24 correspond to the deer, this number became also an offensive synonyms of homosexuality. Parker's interpretation that the choice of the deer is associated to Walt Disney's Bambi, remains open to doubt. I do not believe this is a widely accepted explanation.

As the names – *como*, *chifrudo* – are considered very rude, almost as bad language, people would use other ways of saying the same, such as: 'he will not be able to go through the door anymore'; 'His head has been decorated' or 'His wife is decorating him.'<sup>25</sup> However among these euphemistic ways of referring to it, there is no animal name for men whose wives are adulteresses, as with other forms of sexuality that are considered marginal.<sup>26</sup>

Anton Blok ventures that behind such insults are popular representations about rams and billy-goats. However, in spite of several similarities it does not seem to be the Brazilian case. As Blok has analysed for the Mediterranean case,<sup>27</sup> in Brazilian folklore, sheep and goats are also an opposed but related pair: the sheep is considered a sacred animal,<sup>28</sup> conversely, the billy-goat is associated with the devil, who sometimes takes its form - in popular legends the devil is betrayed by his goat cloven-hooves.<sup>29</sup>

The billy goat (*'bode'*) is also associated with immoderate sexuality,<sup>30</sup> and *'cabra'* (goat) is synonymous with bully-boy, thus associated to courage and bravura. Conversely the ram is not a positive symbol, representing virility, courage, as Blok pointed out for Greece,<sup>31</sup> but it is the symbol of those who are easily manipulated. Those who do not think by themselves, who 'follow the leader' blindly or never disagree with anything. Sheep and lambs are symbols for the most docile. *'Manso'* (docile) is an adjective associated with lambs but to be *'manso'* (meek, docile) has a negative sense. *'Como manso'* or just *'manso'* is a pejorative way of calling the

<sup>25</sup> My grandfather (from the Southern state of Santa Catarina) used to say "Oh, he is another member of Saint Cornélio's Brotherhood" because of the similarity of the names *como* and Cornélio. Also quoted in Jorge Amado's book *Gabriela, Clove and Cinnamon*: 75 – "Her husband looks as if he belonged to the Fraternity of St. Cornelius."

<sup>26</sup> Not only is *veado* (deer) synonymous of homosexuality, *'galinha'* (chicken) is a popular name given to a woman considered to be very promiscuous. However 'hatched chicken' or 'a chicken with its chicks' are associated with motherhood.

<sup>27</sup> "The Sarakatsani men identify themselves with sheep, which are descended from God, while women are identified with goats, descended from the devil. (CAMPBELL, 1964 quoted by SCHNEIDER, 1971: 20).

<sup>28</sup> The association between the billy-goat and the devil derives from medieval times and is linked to wizardry and the witches' Sabbath. In Brazilian folklore this association is explained by the creation of the world, when (they say) God and the Devil were side by side, dutifully making their creatures from clay. Therefore, some animals were created by God and are good, whilst others are the fruit of the Devil's own envy.

<sup>29</sup> For Catholics, the sheep is a symbol of Christ, who is even called *'Agnus Dei'*.

<sup>30</sup> Formerly it was used only for 'mulattos' or 'mestizos' (CASCUDO, 1980 explain the analogy of the *bode* with mulatto for "the rank smell of their armpits.") This meaning still remains in its feminine – *'cabrocha'* – synonymous of *mulata*. *Cabras* were also the name given to the followers of *Lampião* – a North-eastern popular bandit in the 1920s. Hence its meaning of 'courageous', (CASCUDO, 1980:194). As the Portuguese word *cabrão* has both the meaning of billy-goat and cuckold, as in Spain and Italy, one can speculate about the semantic shift of the masculine word for goat, from 'cuckold' to 'mestizo'. It demonstrates the despising of an individual extended to a whole social category. And again the split of the meaning from *mestizo* to 'conman', because *Lampião's* fellows were *'caboclos'*. This can tell us much about social and racial prejudices. see BLOK, 1981, for Portuguese *cabrão*.

<sup>31</sup> It is important to note that when they stay for symbols, there is not distinction between sheep, lambs or rams. They are called in general 'carneiro' (ram).

man whose wife has one love affair after the other. It is regarded as a form of passivity;<sup>32</sup> as if the husband agreed or consented to her adultery. This is considered the most degrading condition for a man. And passivity is also negatively associated with male homosexuality.

The label *cornudo* must be counterposed to the positive label of the '*macho mesmo*' (a macho man indeed, the 'real' man), that is a man who has '*culhões*' (to have balls)<sup>33</sup> and also has 'shame in his face' (*vergonha na cara*) – which means, he does not admit being insulted.<sup>34</sup> Literally they say, he does not carry any insult home with him (*não leva desaforo para casa*). '*Cabras macho*' or '*safado*' are men of '*culhões*'. On the contrary, men seen as '*carneiro*' (ram), or called '*manso*' are regarded as men without '*culhões*' (balls) to react against attack. This fact is the opposite of that described by Blok.

However, things are not so absolute, as shown in Jorge Amado's novel *Gabriela Clove and Cinnamon*,<sup>35</sup> where the question of man deceived by woman appears several times. Rules were clearly set up. Man had just one answer to a female betrayal, that was violence, it was 'an unwritten law.' This novel emphasises the manipulation of the rules, telling how the Arab Nacib did not become horned in spite of Gabriela's adultery. When he had the revelation and did not killing her it would be his total demoralization. However as she had presented false civil documents in fact their marriage was null and void and men had to kill wives not mistresses. Thus, the same strategy used to allow their marriage was then used to null it. Jorge Amado called the chapter: "Of How Nacib Broke And Did Not Break The Unwritten Law." This calls attention to the widely accepted Brazilian ritual called *jeitinho* —a knack for managing things, for manipulating rules that is considered a particularity of Brazilian culture. That is, rules must not be taken as absolute since always one can find a socially accepted way of breaking it.

The '*macho mesmo*' is often a man driven by sex, a '*garanhão*' (literally the stallion),<sup>36</sup> the one who sexually takes anyone available<sup>37</sup> out of the 'real men:' any women or male

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<sup>32</sup> A popular religious invocation says: *Meek and Humble Jesus, do make my heart similar to the Yours*. However, priests explained: that it should be understood that Jesus was meek just in his heart.. No doubt should rest of his maleness. He was a real man, capable of energetic and even violent attitudes when necessary (as evidenced on his attitude against commerce inside the temple).

<sup>33</sup> Paradoxically to have a sack ( *ter sacco*) the popular name given to the scrotum means to have an enormous patience; to bear the unbearable, virtue, or characteristic regarded as feminine. It is linked to other similar expressions: to fill the sack (*encher o sacco*); a full sack (*sacco cheio*), mean to lose the patience. On the contrary, to have a net-lace sack (*um sacco de fiô*), that is impossible to full, would be the superlative form of patience.

<sup>34</sup> PITT-RIVERS, 1965:45; BLOK, 1981: 429.

<sup>35</sup> *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela* was first published in 1958. The story, dated in the 1920s, begins with the killing of Sinházinha, a colonel's wife and her lover, the dentist Osmundo.

<sup>36</sup> According to the Shorter Oxford Dictionaries, Stallion is the man of a lascivious life. In Brazil it has more specifically the meaning of being driven by sex - sexually over- potent and insatiable.

<sup>37</sup> In Brazilian slang, *não perdoa ninguém* (does not 'forgive' anyone)

homosexuals. Meaningfully it is called in Brazilian slang *não 'perdoar' ninguém* (to not 'forgive' anyone) which carries the image of the 'suppliant victim' being dominated by the powerful *macho*. In their code of honourable behaviour they make few exceptions — close relatives and the partners of close friends which are compared to men: "*mulher de amigo p'ra mim é homem.*" (Literally: a friend's wife is like a man for me).

The pornographic comics which were very popular among the Brazilian male readership must be understood in this context.

### '*Sacanagem*' and Pornography

Roberto DaMatta<sup>38</sup> underlines a Brazilian word that is impossible to translate into any other language, '*sacanagem*'. This term has either the meaning of an ambiguous, mischievous or wicked action against someone; or the one, of intense sexual pleasure. According to Aurelio Buarque de Holanda's Brazilian Dictionaries of Portuguese Language '*Sacanagem*' is the action of a '*sacana*' person. And '*sacana*' could mean a scoundrel, a rogue, a slicker, a homosexual, a joker (who makes dirty jokes), or a shameless person. All of them have in common the idea of transgression of norms and socially accepted behaviour.<sup>39</sup> "The concept of *sacanagem* links ideas of aggression and hostility, joking and playing, sexual excitation and erotic practice into the same symbolic complex."<sup>40</sup> Thus, '*Sacanagem*' is the sexual idiom for the domain of the forbidden, the transgression, the sinful.

Using the examples of DaMatta – if one says "He 'did a *sacanagem*' to Pedro," it has the negative sense of being deeply harmful or unfair. But if they say " I saw Pedro in a good *sacanagem* with Mary" it means that they were involved in an erotic and pleasant situation that could be or not complete sexual intercourse. In a sense it corresponds to 'heavy petting' but its name has implicit the first meaning of a mischievous action.<sup>41</sup>

In the 1950s, sex was regarded either as sacred, or as impure. In the first conception it was seen as superior, serious, something to be controlled and put at the service of human reproduction, family, marriage, and Christian morality.<sup>42</sup> "Or, by contrast, it was regarded as inferior, dirty, something for the amusement of socially disqualified persons; at the same time it was also seen as free, part of an uncontrollable section of society. However, according to

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<sup>38</sup> DAMATTA, 1983:24-25. See also the interview with Richard Parker in *Veja*. 24 (1203): 710; 9/10/1991.

<sup>39</sup> It also has the meaning of masturbation, '*sacana*' being also someone who 'masturbates' other.

<sup>40</sup> PARKER, 1991: 159.

<sup>41</sup> In the first sense it means that the person did something dirty to Pedro. In the other sense it is close to 'hanky-panky.'

<sup>42</sup> DAMATTA, 1983: 26-27.

DaMatta, at that time, there was no conception of sexuality as egalitarian or natural. Nor was it regarded as an individual prerogative, something to be used at one's discretion. It was considered as something under the control of society (which evaluates it either as good or as bad): "The dominant ideology about our sexuality regards it as divided between the house and the street, pleasure and duty, man and woman."<sup>43</sup> For DaMatta, the idea of '*sacanagem*' makes the bridge between these points – an idea that would need further discussion.<sup>44</sup>

'*Livrinhos de Sacanagem*' (*Sacanagem* booklets) were the generic term given to highly pornographic comics, very popular among men in the 1950s and 1960s. They were very cheap, badly drawn in black and white, badly printed and were clandestinely sold in kiosks, "whose owner was the one responsible for a particular form of censorship, deciding to whom he could sell them. He also pressed the consumer to buy an issue of a 'serious' magazine' into which the booklet were to be slipped." They circulated and were read, in a kind of secret ritual, "in offices [...] garages, barber shops and other places where women were seldom admitted".<sup>45</sup>

It seems that the male adolescents were his target readership and they significantly nicknamed those booklets '*catecismos*' (catechisms). They were the same size as the religious booklets, very small and thin, and like them, badly printed in cheap paper.<sup>46</sup> The '*livrinhos de sacanagem*' revealed the mysteries or the unknown to neophytes in sexual matters, as the former did in religion. The irony of giving the same name to things that are regarded in extreme opposition is telling: not only had sex always been regarded with suspicion by the Church, as the kind of sex exhibited in those booklets could be labelled as a transgression or rather sinful. But the name 'catechism' also indicates an analogy between them: it is as if they shared the same objective, that was a pedagogical function – responsible for their success.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.:27.

<sup>44</sup> Roberto DaMatta uses the idea of *Sacanagem* to his analyses of the 'ambiguities of Brazilian society. I do not totally agree with the inferences he makes about Brazilian society from this point of view. However, a full analysis of his arguments goes beyond the scope of this thesis.

<sup>45</sup> D'ASSUNÇÃO, 1984:11.

<sup>46</sup> A collection of 12 booklets was called 'Testament' whilst a set of 24 constituted a 'Bible. KFOURI, 1991: 94.

<sup>47</sup> *The most important aspect of Zéfiro's booklets is that they were very didactic [...] When there were few books of sexual education, the 'catechisms' showed clearly what could happen when a man and a woman stayed alone in a room. They provided much more information than the 'official' books, since they also showed the 'forbidden things' [...]. Although in an intuitive and unpretentious way, Zéfiro illustrated patterns of behaviour, he not only showed the physical aspects he also enlightened the possible psychological reactions.* MARINHO, 1983:6. *The narrative was very instructive: improved my level of erotic expertise and my knowledge of anatomy. It enhanced my linguistic perception of the issue, by providing a rich popular vocabulary and exciting terminology.* D'ASSUNÇÃO, 1984: 158.

Some of them were signed by Carlos Zéfiro, whose identity remained a mystery until very recently.<sup>48</sup> No one knew anything about him, whether it was his real name, or even if it was the fictitious name of a group of artists. His booklets are considered most important and are subject of studies today.<sup>49</sup> Zéfiro's characters were stereotyped, and the behaviour described was not so far from real life. It was fantasy, but inside the boundaries of reality. Usually, Zéfiro's stories were written in the first person and certainly this would make it easier for the reader to identify himself with Zéfiro's heroes.<sup>50</sup>

The didactic character derived from the possibility of this identification, so that the reader could imagine how a girl would react and how he should behave in each case, by looking at what the figures did in the story. Sometimes its pedagogic intention was made more explicit as in '*Conselhos Quadrados*' (Conservative Advice). In this story the grandmother gives advice to her granddaughter just prior to her wedding day, through the remembrances of her own honeymoon and her horror when facing her husband's desire for '*sacanagem*.' As all Zéfiro's heroines, the granddaughter is a pseudo-virgin who listen patiently to all the advice, summed up in Grandmother's phrase: "but remember, never agree with your husband if he wants a *sacanagem*. Let him do just what is right. " And the girl thinks " Well, I have been doing exactly the contrary."<sup>51</sup> In this story the intention of the author was to show how the parameters of right and wrong, regarding sexuality, had changed from one generation to the other.

These stories can be read as several versions of the same myth: the myth of sexual roles in Brazilian societies: the 'over-potent *macho*' vis-à-vis women, who, in spite of the respectable cover of some, are all equally lascivious. They only need a real macho to unveil what they really are — and as the male figures reflects man's fantasies, anguishes and standards about male role and body, that is the ideal of a sexually over potent man with a penis

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<sup>48</sup> In November 1991, it was revealed that he was a retired civil servant, also a composer of sambas named Alcides Caminha, born in 1913. He confessed that he kept his identity as secret because of his family. He died soon after that report. Juca Kfourir, 'O Fim de 30 Anos de Mistério', *Playboy*, Nov. 1991:94-97, 159. Similar booklets that formerly circulated are listed by MARINHO, 1983

<sup>49</sup> A first book about this artist was edited in 1983. It contains seven of his stories, preceded by several analyses made by the journalist Sergio Augusto: the anthropologist Roberto DaMatta, the semiologist Domingos Demasis, and an introduction made by the editor of the book. Soon after, a more complete description of Carlos Zéfiro's work was made by Otacilio d'Assunção, who also included two of Zéfiro stories. However, Otacilio's text did not have an academic purpose, and was intended for "those who once had been forced to hide their comics under the mattress." So his language is very rude, in fact not so far from that of the author he was analysing. MARINHO, 1983: text in the cover. The stories printed on these two books, and a few booklets are the main source of data for my comments.

<sup>50</sup>The artist used a simply descriptive line, limited to few plastic resources, as if he wanted to present the referent (the erotic action) in an immediate form. Instead of being a sign of naive eroticism, it seems to me that this simplicity was a way of integrating the reader in the universe portrayed. There the reader could either identify himself with the hero or the artist, since he was also able to draw the same. SILVA, 1983:148.

<sup>51</sup> D'ASSUNÇÃO, 1984:164-165.

of exaggerated size.<sup>52</sup> And as a myth, the apparent inversion or transgression of rules,<sup>53</sup> are but the reaffirmation of the more conservative conceptions about gender roles, and social norms.

In Zéfiro's stories there is no sexless woman – there are reluctant virgins, unsatisfied wives, and repressed widows vis-à-vis man, the '*garanhão*.' Gender stereotypes as expressed in these popular male belief are all reaffirmed: "*no woman is a saint*" [except my mother, sisters and daughters]; "there is no sexless or frigid woman but only sexually incompetent men or ill-seduced women" (including lesbians). In male belief, 'incompetent men' are not to be pitied but to be substituted ( thus, betrayed husbands are just the victims of their own lack of sexual skills<sup>54</sup>). Zéfiro's heroes are always presumptuous of their maleness which is not affected by homosexual relationships.<sup>55</sup>

In these stories, DaMatta's triangle does not exist – lasciviousness made all woman equal with the only major exception – one's own mother. Therefore, humour preserved the figure of the de-sexualised mother, never to be defiled, not even by a legitimate sexual life with a legal husband – restricted to the domain of procreation, whilst pleasure was left for the 'whore'. So fixed was the image of the de-sexualised mother, that Carlos Zéfiro, who had broken many taboos in his booklets<sup>56</sup> – such as paedophilia, zoophilia, and even some forms of incest<sup>57</sup> – never wrote a story about an incestuous relationship between son and mother.<sup>58</sup> This form of incest is such a taboo that the identification between reader and narrator would never occur at least at the level of the reader's conscience. It does not mean that the same respect would be extended to someone else's mother.

Zéfiro also awarded utmost respect to virginity but not to the virgin, in fact he respected the physical sign – the unbroken hymen. The majority of Zéfiro's plots concerned the long and

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<sup>52</sup> This fantasy is epitomised in Zéfiro's story '*João Cavalão*' (believed to have 'a third leg').

<sup>53</sup> An analogous inversion of reality occurs in the case of homosexual jokes in male friendships' - common as a manifestation of familiarity. Close friends, and only they, used to tease one another by making references about their supposed homosexual relationship. It is done by saying phrases in a caricatured feminine accent, or making supposed homosexual gestures. It is important to note that these jokes only occur where there is no doubt about their maleness, and by inverting the pattern, they reinforce the male stereotype. It is analogous to the affective use of bad words among friends. For the analogous friendly use of dirt words, see CASCUDO, 1956.

<sup>54</sup> This explains why the '*como*' are to be ridiculed.

<sup>55</sup> There are no stories about homosexual relationships; male homosexuals only provided the opportunity for the heroes to prove their 'addiction' to sex, whilst lesbians provided the opportunity to prove that they were just 'ill-seduced women.'

<sup>56</sup> In Zéfiro's stories there is no sado-masochist relationship or examples of feminine bondage. In just one story the woman cuffed the man in the bed. But as always, it is only an excuse for him to display his extraordinary sexual skills.

<sup>57</sup> According to D'ASSUNÇÃO, incestuous relationships are always part of the heroine's past, they are referred to as something distant, thus lessening a possible identification of the reader, who would more likely recognise himself on someone in the present. (D'ASSUNÇÃO, 1984:114-117.)

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.:114-115.

ceaseless process of seduction of virgin girls carried out by the hero. The story named '*Titia*' (Aunt)<sup>59</sup> tells the whole process of seduction of a virgin spinster, day by day during a whole month, as if the narrative was her diary. Each day she gives away a bit more, and at the end she is left alone and pregnant. Contrary to the preaching of the Fathers of the Church who emphasised the supremacy of spiritual virginity over physical,<sup>60</sup> in Zéfiro's stories every form of sex was allowed to the virgins, provided there was no vaginal penetration.

Thus Zéfiro taught how to subvert the moral impediments which also involved social class issues: the hero would try to respect the physical virginity of the girls, but in general the girl herself asked for the contrary. According to D'Assunção, if she were a rich girl, or the daughter of an important man of the community, the hero would marry the girl. But if she were poor, the man would simply run away. The story *A Negrinha* provides a good example: In this case the man was the farmer's son who runs away leaving pregnant a young black girl. Here two kinds of prejudices are mixed: social and racial. To leave a girl pregnant was strongly disapproved of, starting with his parents. However in cases like this one (a poor and black girl) man could count on their complicity and even with their support. His peer group would justify their act saying: "Who would let a son spoil his life?"<sup>61</sup> However, D'Assunção regarded the story '*Titia*' as an exception, and it was not. In that case, as the woman probably was older than 21 (otherwise she would not yet be regarded as a spinster) the man could not be legally forced to marry. That is why he simply left her.

In this sense, Zéfiro was very conservative. His 'lessons' were not only about the manipulation of physical impediments, he also showed how to handle social ones. As happened in real life, the code of honour was more firmly respected, according to the social class or situation of the girl / woman involved. So when the man had 'good intentions', he would respect her physical virginity, waiting for the honeymoon.<sup>62</sup> This touches on the popular meaning of virginity, because even anal sex was considered part of 'heavy petting,' as an alternative to not losing physical virginity.

In the 1950s, the preaching of priests, teachers, or religious manuals would advise against the hypocrisy of 'these pseudo- virginal modern girls.' The Church, since St. Augustine, had valued not only physical but spiritual virginity. In this sense, a girl who indulged in 'heavy

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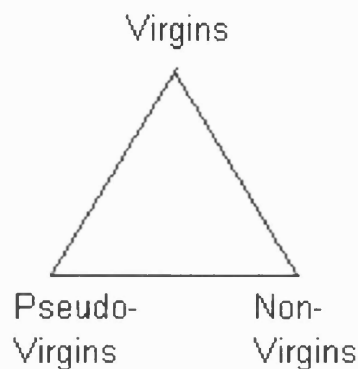
<sup>59</sup> *Titia* (auntie) is generally used as synonymous with spinster. This story is reprinted in Otacilio d'Assunção's book. D'ASSUNÇÃO, 1984: 95-111.

<sup>60</sup> See chapter 2.

<sup>61</sup> D'ASSUNÇÃO, 1984:55.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*:54- 55.





petting' was not a true virgin, since she had lost her 'purity of spirit'.<sup>63</sup> There was a great difference between the two conceptions: whilst the church stressed the importance of the intention, the popular conception valued the hymen as the proof of virginity.

Taking the first distinction between 'nice girls' and the '*garotas faladas*' or 'the others', we need to make a further distinction. Again we have a triangular model where 'nice girls' are opposed to two kinds of 'other girls': those who only indulged in heavy petting, but remained virgins, and those who were not physically virgins anymore.

In this sense, '*sacanagem*' is 'the intermediate solution'<sup>64</sup> that makes a synthesis (pseudo-virginity) between the two categories: virgins and non-virgins. According to DaMatta,<sup>65</sup> *sacanagem*, in the idiom of sexuality, is similar to '*jeitinho*'<sup>66</sup> and '*malandragem*' because all of them are the reverse of the dominion of rules, law or order.

Although law is intended to be universal, in fact not everyone is subject to it; thus the universal rules or norms are regarded as a punishment to those who are submitted to them.<sup>67</sup> This reinforces the argument of Marlene Rodrigues that in Brazil we lived "dealing with the denial, not with the rules."

<sup>63</sup> See chapter 2 of this thesis. This contradiction between the common opinion and Church's preaching about virginity is akin to that one about homosexuality. (see the excursus about honour).

<sup>64</sup> DAMATTA, 1983:27.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.:28.

<sup>66</sup> According to Livia Neves de Holanda Barbosa, the '*jeitinho*' (a knack for managing things) is "a mechanism for the transformation of individuals into persons [.....] It occurs when the agent by becoming a person, tries to avoid the subordination to a norm or law, that is universal and impersonal. "The subordination to that norm would characterise the role of an individual citizen. BARBOSA, 1992.

The social drama of the *jeitinho*, tries to express a positive reaction to another mechanism of avoiding the rules that is '*voce sabe com quem esta falando ?*' (do you know to whom are you speaking ?) that only can be used for those who have power, or the right relationships. (DAMATTA, 1978) So, the *jeitinho* tries to conciliate the egalitarian individualist principle with the personal treatment in a hierarchical and 'holistic' perspective. ' BARBOSA, 1992:52. See also DAMATTA, 1986: 93-107.

<sup>67</sup> For Roberto DaMatta, the impersonal domain of the law in Brazil is substituted by the logic of personal relationship, which is illustrated by a joke which shows the way things operate among those who hold power – "for friends, all the privileges; for the others, none; for enemies I reserve the law." Thus, the individual is the one deprived of a network of acquaintances, which allows a different kind of treatment to those who have it

## *Woman According to Male Cartoonists*

Another source of data about woman in the male imaginary in the 1950s, are the cartoons published in the most important magazine of that time – 'O *Cruzeiro*'. The first was 'O *Amigo da Onça*' (literally, the friend of the Jaguar, an expression that meant a disloyal friend).<sup>68</sup> In a way, the '*Amigo da Onça*' could be included in DaMatta's model of understanding Brazil, as one example of '*malandragem*'. The *Amigo da Onça* survived by cheating others, pointing up their errors, demerits, inferiority; thus taking advantage or deriving power.<sup>69</sup>

The question is how and why could women be his victims, what can his action reveal about the male imaginary about the feminine role in the 1950s?. The *Amigo da Onça* did succeed because he could denounce someone's 'unsuitableness' as lack of beauty, ageing, poverty, sickness, provided him good grounds for his action.<sup>70</sup> What makes him important to this thesis is that his action is inserted into the boundaries of established social stereotypes, values, behaviours, aesthetic and ethical patterns.

From the viewpoint of the *Amigo da Onça* woman had to be young and beautiful – an attractive sexual object. Her suffering derived from the fact that she lived according to the same standards of youth, beauty, fidelity and morality, and failed to match them.<sup>71</sup> The cartoons intensified the signs that could make ageing or lack of beauty more ridiculous. A common plot involved woman looking for professional aid either in books or beauty parlour, and getting this comment from *Amigo da Onça*: "As I can see, you haven't improved a bit." Or "it can't help you in anyway."

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<sup>68</sup> O *Amigo da Onça* was created by Pericles Maranhão, and had been published from 1943 to 1964, when his creator committed suicide. Generally, it was drawn in colours and took a whole page of the 'O *Cruzeiro*'.

<sup>69</sup> For the historian Marcos Antonio da Silva, who analysed this character, his action could only be developed because his victims "accepted a living social space expressed in rules, exigencies, pressures, strict watchfulness and tricks." And the *Amigo da Onça* was always successful, because many times the 'other' was caught in *flagrant delicto* transgressing accepted norms. A character like this can only exist in an environment where rules were meant to be broken, denied or manipulated; or else where the '*jeitinho*' and '*malandragem*' are recognised social ways of dealing with the norms. SILVA, 1989:109.

<sup>70</sup> However the *Amigo da Onça* seldom used the same reasons to deceive a man because beauty is not regarded as man's most important attribute as it is with woman.



*Amigo da Onça* comments: "Boa, muito boa! [Good! Very Good] But after her thirties she will be looking like you."<sup>73</sup>

<sup>73</sup> *Boa* is the feminine of *bom* that is translated by good. However at that time, '*mulher boa*' was a slang that meant a woman with a beautiful body shape. In Brazilian terms, a beautiful woman's body had the shape of a guitar that is small breast, narrow waist and large hips. *Boa* (good) or *Violão* (guitar) were used as synonyms in this sense. *O Cruzeiro*, 49: 47, 29/9/1945.

As woman is supposed to remain young, she must always hide her age; allusions to this issue were used to provoke embarrassment and distress. *Amigo da Onça* succeeded because woman also accepted that youth and beauty must be her main attributes, deriving confidence from them. However, she also accepted that her value relied on man's opinion.



"As anyone can see: the Old and the New Year"<sup>75</sup>

Ultimately, he had the power of making or destroying woman's confidence and of frustrating her emotional expectations, such as his manipulation of the time and occasions of a 'date', accentuating her dependence on his wishes – a very common situation at the time.<sup>76</sup> That men make women to cry is common sense, as is the feminine phrase: 'women who cries because of men has not shame on the face.'<sup>77</sup>

<sup>75</sup> In Portuguese he says 'ta na cara' literary 'it's on the face' (it's obvious) which makes a meaningful pun in this situation. *O Cruzeiro* 33 (12) 31/12/60. At that time it was a very common representation, present in every magazine on the 31th of December: an old man going out and a baby coming in. Marcos Antonio da Silva points out that this cartoon is built up from contrasts: the polarity between modest women and excessive [drunken] men; the old woman's distress after the comparison is parallel to the acme of men's pleasure. SILVA, 1989:107.

<sup>76</sup> Examples could either be a woman complaining to the boy friend (with *Amigo da Onça's* face) that the phone number he gave her was wrong; or the other saying to a lady waiting in the rain: "I thought we were still in summer schedule."

<sup>77</sup> *Mulher que chora por homem não tem vergonha na cara.*

Other situations desecrate woman's intimacy — represented either as secret, or as an object for admiration and desire — which become shameful and degrading when trespassed in a unfair manner.

These cartoons only make sense in terms of a time when woman's intimacy was really a taboo. At a time when girls tried to buy feminine absorbents only from female sellers.<sup>78</sup> Men was supposed not to know anything about woman's issues, or to live as if such things didn't exist at all.

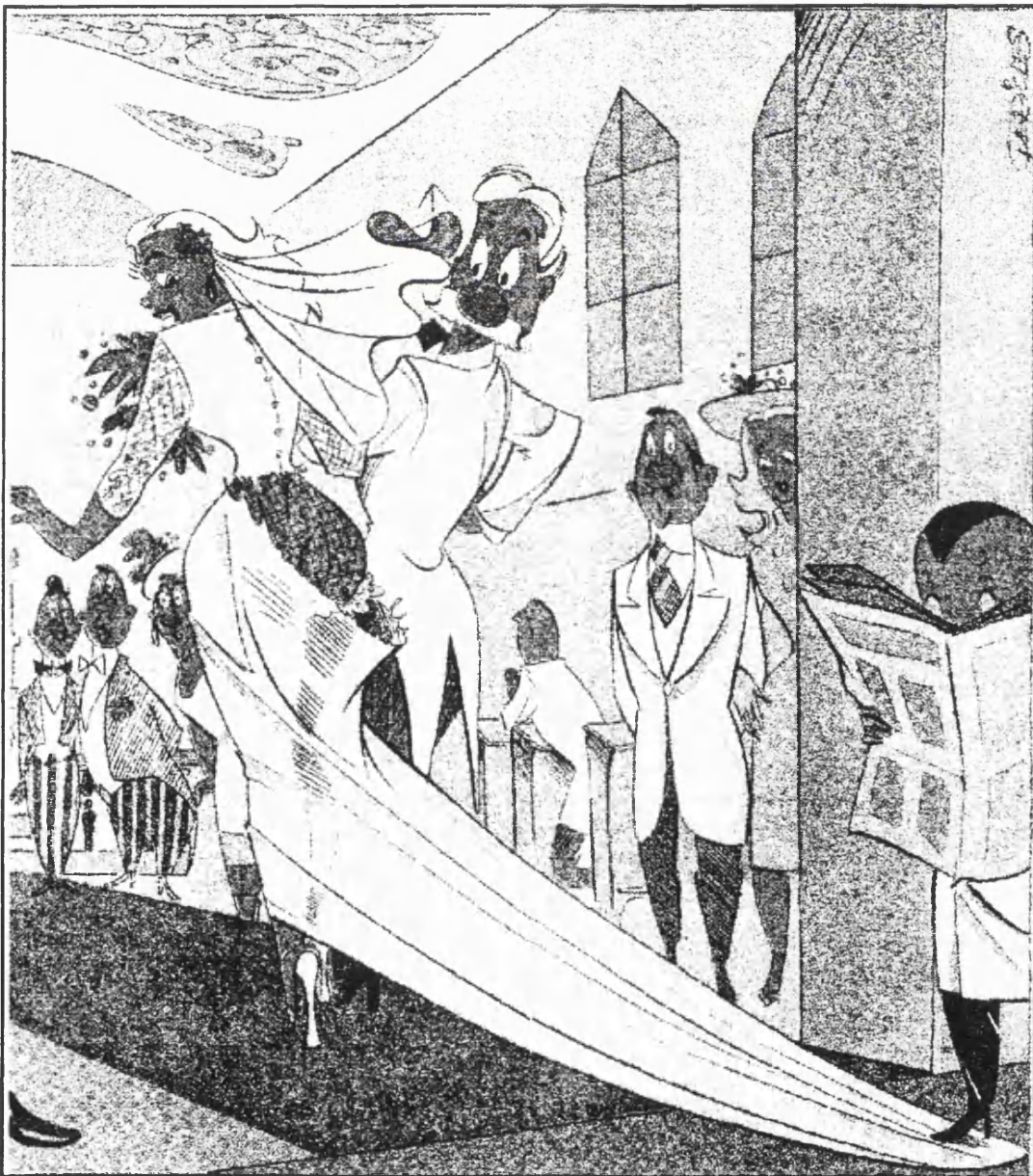


*Amigo da Onça comments: Have you realized that the last room had mirrors on the floor?<sup>77</sup>*

<sup>77</sup> O Cruzeiro 25 (46) 29/8/53.

<sup>78</sup> See also chapter 7 of this thesis

The *Amigo da Onça* goes against a pattern of social behaviour which allowed woman the right to privacy or modesty; and expects from man the duty to guarantee it. This modesty is ritualised in the wedding that is surrounded by many symbols reinforcing purity, innocence, modesty. It is a ritual that allows the sharing of that privacy with just one man. The gesture of the *Amigo da Onça* means it is shared by the public, especially the men.<sup>79</sup>



<sup>79</sup> O Cruzeiro 25 (45) 2/8/1953.

Finally this cartoon below shows another level of disclosure of woman's intimacy.<sup>80</sup>



The girl says : ' I just trust on you because you do not look at me as the other men do.'

<sup>80</sup> O Cruzeiro 26 (49).27 19/9/54.

## *Carlos Estevão's Bitter Portrait Of Woman*

Another cartoonist was Carlos Estevão who also published in '*O Cruzeiro*'. He did not have a single character such as the *Amigo da Onça*, instead he made series around a theme or a character. Two of their series: '*Ser Mulher*' (To Be a Woman) and '*Casamento – Antes e Depois*' (Marriage: Before and After) provide a bitter portrait of both – the institution and women.

'*Ser Mulher*' usually was developed as a single cartoon in a page where patterns of behaviour considered as modern, were caricatured.<sup>81</sup> And in the other pages, a series of cartoons caricatured what in fact it should be.



**To Be A Woman Is Not : to worry about silly superfluous things**

<sup>81</sup> ESTEVÃO 1986:21.





TO BE A WOMAN IS NOT to stroll in the streets like the *Garotas* of Alceu: <sup>82</sup>

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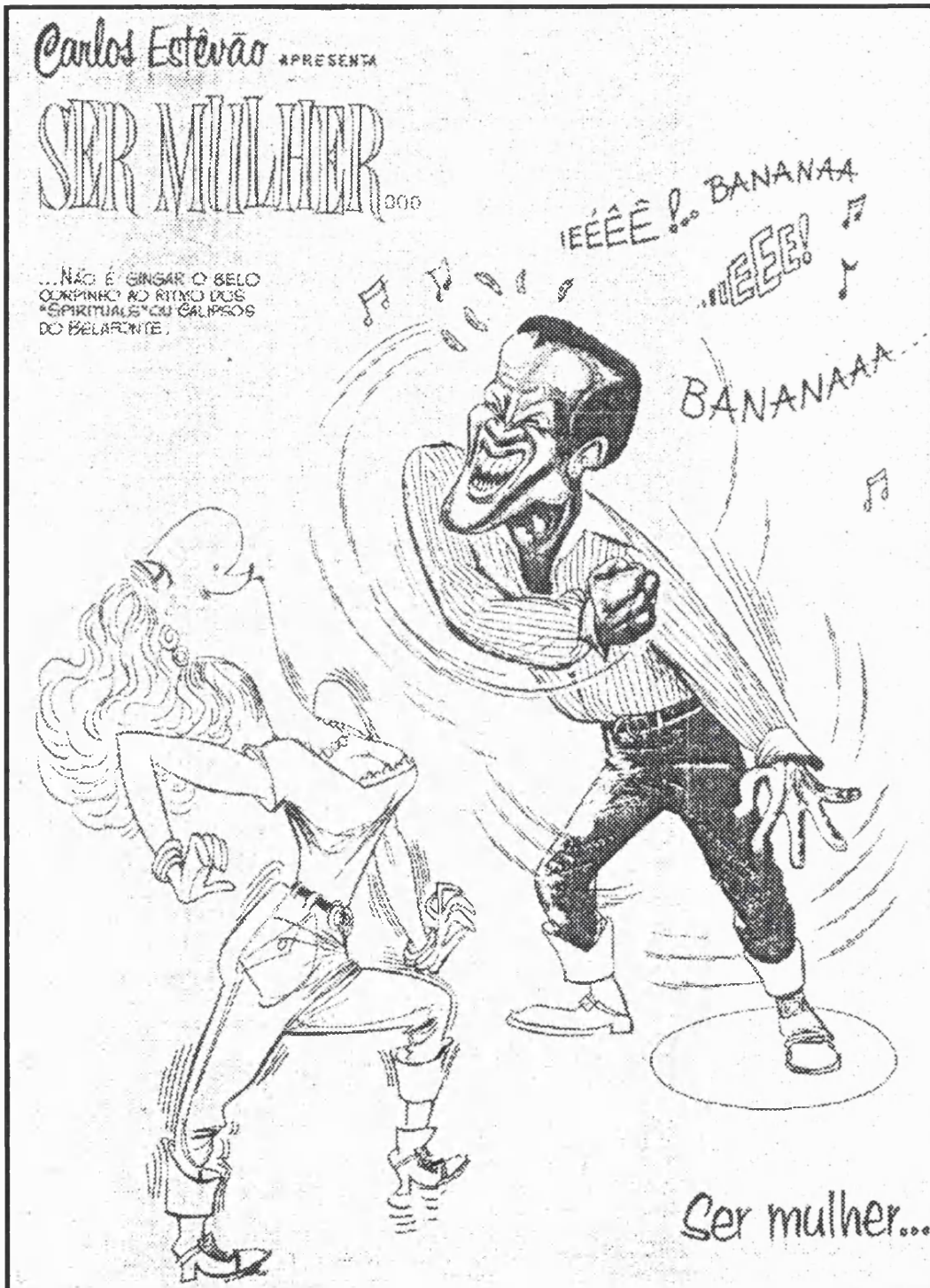
<sup>82</sup> ESTEVÃO, *ibid.*:18.



*To Be a Woman is Not:*<sup>83</sup> Laying down to read Françoise Sagan's books

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<sup>83</sup> ESTEVÃO, *ibid.* : 31.



**To Be a Woman is Not:** rocking your beautiful body to the sound of Harry Belafonte's calypsos<sup>84</sup>

<sup>84</sup> O Cruzeiro, nd.



BUT TO BE A WOMAN IS to be stoic, sacrificing herself – physically and morally – for her husband's refined well being...<sup>85</sup>

<sup>85</sup> [ she is also singing a lullaby.] ESTEVÃO, *ibid.* : 21..



**BUT TO BE A WOMAN IS** To care for her husband's comfort at home :

[he:] – *Be quiet Mary you disturb me, moving that much!*

[she] – *Sorry honey... that is because I am using this time to knit a sweater for you.*<sup>86</sup>

<sup>86</sup> O Cruzeiro: 57, 28/5/1955

This series is reinforced by its supposed opposite:



TO BE A MAN IS NOT: assuming chivalrous attitudes as in Luis XV times...

but it is giving to the wife perfect freedom to choose her pastimes and daily tasks.

[she] *do you mean that I can have a choice ?*

[ he] *That's right my dear. You have free choice and I do want you to choose: would you prefer to cook or to do the washing?*<sup>87</sup>

<sup>87</sup> O Cruzeiro 14/4/1956, printed in *Nosso Século* v 4 : 135.

This author seems to take woman unawares in ridiculous attitudes, or in that very moment of actions that are performed in



*To Be a Woman is not: "strolling on the beach in Lollobridigian attitudes, heating her weak brains under the sun;"*

quite well illustrated by the cartoons on this page: the skinny woman with bent legs in a ridiculous swimming suit, looking very proud of her appearance; the self-believed elegant woman showing off her slip and an umbrella which pulls the jacket spoiling her desired effect; finally the woman who is finishing her make-up: a small placard says 'wet paint;' the smoke flying from a chemical flask signalizes the idea woman's beauty derives from a sort of alchemy.<sup>88</sup> Actually, although ridiculing woman's modern life style, it is



*To Be a Woman is not go window shopping conspiring against her husband's budget*

secrecy. His aim seems to be to contrast what woman thinks of herself when dressed or performing acts labelled as fashionable by the media, to her real appearance. That is to say the contrast of fantasy and reality. It is

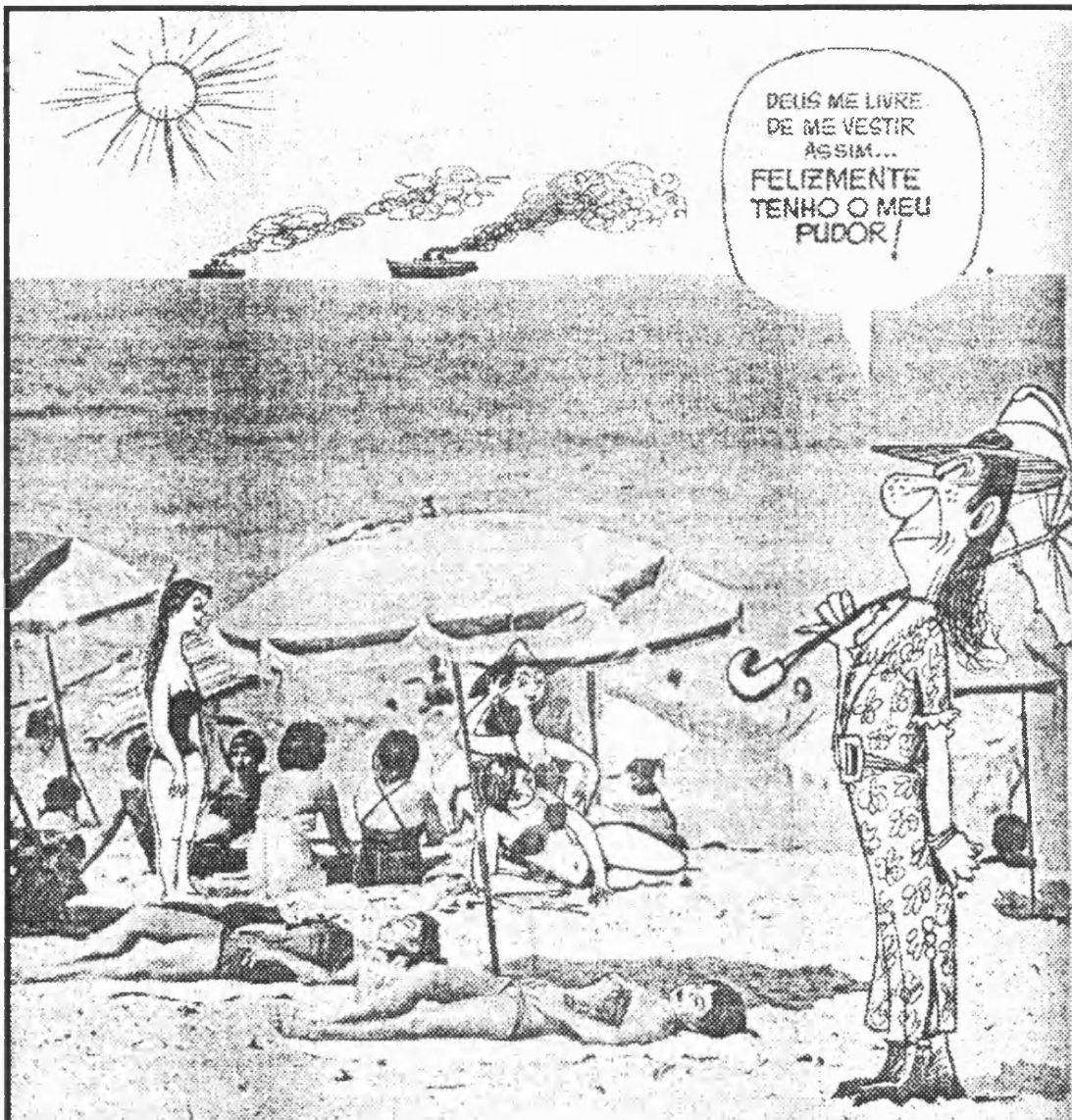


*To Be a Woman is not daydreaming in front of the mirror in a moving narcissism, finishing her natural charms, that is traps by handling little pliers, nippers, brushes, scissors and cosmetics.*

<sup>88</sup> O Cruzeiro 28/5/55 : 56. My underline.

not in Estevão's phrases that his contempt over woman lies, but are the small details of his pictures that underline the bitter and sarcastic accent of his critiques.

As the dictates of consumer society increased the links between beauty and youth, woman's ageing was a common plot for the author's humour.<sup>89</sup> The contrast between a young and an older woman provides the grounds for the irony stressed by the title.<sup>90</sup>



**WORDS OF RELIEF.** *"Help me God from dressing such clothes totally against my decency!"*

<sup>89</sup> Occasionally he could be quite sympathetic with the problems faced by women's lack of beauty, as in 'Moça Feia.' ESTEVÃO, 1986: 10-11.

<sup>90</sup> ESTEVÃO, 'Palavras que Consolam.' (Words of Relief) *O Cruzeiro*, 28 (50) 56 7/7/56.



The story 'Lourival, o Ingrato' (Lourival the ungrateful).<sup>91</sup> best reveals Carlos Estevão's bitterness towards women.



At the beginning the wife is idly lying on a sofa. She seems to be in her thirties. Then the steps of going to bed are shown: she had been transformed into an aged woman, perhaps in her sixties. By her appearance and feelings she would be classified as a 'bruxa' (witch) that is a popular way of despising woman that dominates her husband, and are considered machiavellian, ugly and bad.

<sup>91</sup> ESTEVÃO, 1986: 22-23.

# LOURIVAL, o ingrato



By contrast, the husband is pictured as the victim of his wife's cupidity. After showing all the complaints of the wife who decided to poison him after discovering a pair of earrings ( "That's it! The earrings...the money he kept to himself...the shameless man spent it with the others or larking about... How can he be so ungrateful..."), the author presented the husband's side ( "I swear that in two years' time I will be able to give my old woman a better life...My poor wife. Tomorrow is her birthday and I only could buy those cheap earrings. It seems that she put too much black pepper in the meal... the meal is quite spicy!!.. oh! old Lourival is going to take a good nap.")

Carlos Estevão used a series of clichés contrasting the life style of the husband and wife of the lower middle classes – where an ordinary man is the person who works hard to give the family the best he can, unfortunately less than advertisements show and his family demands. The author pictured this contrast using common sense clichés about a couple's problems and daily life.<sup>1</sup>

First the idea that housework is not real work, thus the concept very much present in common sense thinking that a wife at home does not do anything at all (Carlos Estevão pictured her lying idle on a sofa, elegantly coiffed and putting on make-up). Again he explores the contrast between the woman before and after putting on make-up.

Then the story displays the source of conjugal problems: the interminable visit of the woman's relatives; the competition with wealthy friends, consequently the wife's demand for dresses, expensive jewellery, cars; her controlling of his wages (*"he earns six hundred quid a month and only gives me five hundred and eighty! Where is he spending the rest of the money?"*); her insensibility about his problems and her lack of understanding of what is the life of those who have to work hard (*"he works in an industry during the day; at night, in the petrol station. And now he decided to get a job as street-peddler during lunch time"*) her baseless jealousy, a consequence of paying attention to the gossip of friends (*"first I was a complete fool and believed in everything he told me [...] But the others start to speak and I became smarter..."*)

There are also problems rooted in new expectations about husband's role spread by novels, movies and magazines (*"He could have dinner with me... he should stay home at night"*). It is important to note that the same issues are present in advice books for wives or brides-to-be. Their authors warn women against all these points as source of disharmony.

The irony of the situation starts from the title itself – the ungrateful Lourival, and underlines the paradox of the culture of machismo, where man is supposed to be the master of the house, giving orders and being blindly obeyed. He is represented as the dominant one, the one who has power, whilst the woman is submissive, dependent, subordinate.

However, the woman manipulates her [apparently unfavourable] situation: she knows how to order, seeming to be just asking for a favour. The idea that woman ultimately holds sway over her family is common sense, as the popular dictum states – "I am the master of the house, but it is my wife who rules it."

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<sup>1</sup> See religious manuals, such as SOUZA, 1957, 1958; DESMARAIS, 1952, 1955; NEGROMONTE, 1961.



HEROES IN THE NIGHT: the husband plans to react against his wife's 'tyranny', promising himself to aggressively react to her demands.

represented as the sponsor for the wife's illimitable demands, a figure to be pitied, thus inverting the image of domination and submission as in other terms the *samba dor de cotovelo* also did.<sup>93</sup>



The wife orders that he can only go to the office after taking the dog for a walk and buying spaghetti for lunch. The husband submissively asks: "and how do you want it, honey, thin or thick?"

<sup>92</sup> See for instance 'Diário de uma noiva.' (A Bride's Diary) *O Cruzeiro*, 26 (31):64-65, 15/5/1954; *Á Psicologia das Garotas - no diário dele e no dela.* (The girl's psychology, according to his and hers diaries.) ESTEVÃO, 1986: 36-37; and the series 'Casamento Antes e Depois.' (Before and After Marriage.)

<sup>93</sup> See footnote 10 of this chapter.

For Estevão gender interests or conflicts seem irreconcilable, one only achieves well-being at the expense of the other's exploitation or frustration. In the author's graphical



representation husbands are smaller, skinnier and weaker; wives taller, fatter and stronger. For Marcos Antonio da Silva it expresses "the masculine incapacity to impose a decision or to resist to a woman's demands."<sup>79</sup>

**INNOCENT QUESTION:** 'Have you married? More than the difference of size between the couple, the contrast between their expression: exultant for the woman and distressed for the man is striking.



**FEMININE INTUITION** Everyday the husband tells the wife absurd stories and unequivocal lies to justify his coming home late. She always believes on him. On the day he tells the truth, she became furious: *You're a liar!! I know you're trying to cheat me because my feminine intuition never fails!!*

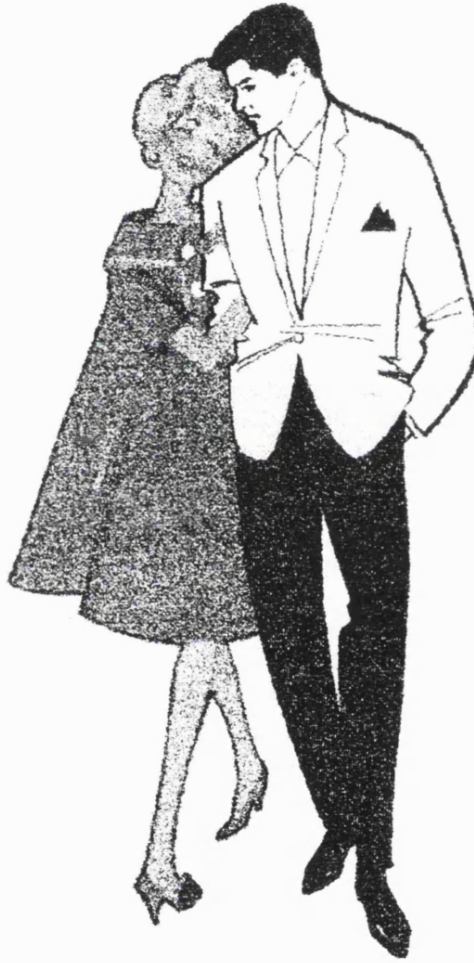
<sup>79</sup>SILVA, 1989 143. 'Perguntas Inocentes.' O Cruzeiro.

## *"As Garotas"*

Contrary to the others, Alceu Penna's cartoons were not critical of woman's role, nor of male and female relationship. On the contrary, his characters – known as *As Garotas* (the girls, or flappers) taught young women how to dress, talk and behave in a modern way.<sup>81</sup>

*As Garotas* are single, young, modern, beautiful, up-to-date in fashion, behaviour, but they represent the stereotype of the frivolous, unschooled beautiful girl who only thinks about marriage. They were created in April 1938, and announced as "the girls who have oomph, the naughty and restless girls that are the expression of modern life."<sup>82</sup> The *Garotas* lasted up to 1964 and provide a good illustration of the 1950s life-style. As a report from the magazine *Veja* explained: "These cartoons showed joyful adolescents who danced in Carnival, drove Cadillacs and 'namoravam' cadets at elegant balls."<sup>83</sup> Journalist Priscila Freire concluded their description:

*They learned how to drive, went to lectures, attended language or child study courses, changed the skirt for trousers, went to the psychoanalyst, were brides maids at their friend's weddings in May; wore baby-dolls to sleep; drank champagne on New Year's Eve; and chiefly, used fancy dresses every Carnival: pirate, Gypsy or 'columbine' dresses.<sup>84</sup>*



<sup>81</sup> He also was the principal stylist of *O Cruzeiro*. Not only did he create his own models, he also adapted French stylists' fashion to middle-class taste.

<sup>82</sup> VEJA, *Brotos de volta*, 13/7/1983: 121.

<sup>83</sup> VEJA *ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> Columbine is a character from the Comedia del'Art. These fancy dresses were built up around conventional signs to make them identifiable by the public. Priscila Freire, 'Fomos Nós as Garotas do Alceu?' in *As Garotas do Alceu. Catalogue of the Exhibition*. Belo Horizonte, 5 to 24/7/1983.

Unlike other characters that caricatured woman to make them ridiculous, the 'Garotas' showed Brazilian girls what was in fashion in Rio, then the capital city of Brazil. As the journalist Ziraldo pointed out:

*For more than one decade, every pretty girl in Brazil, did her hair, sat down and dressed as the Garotas de Alceu. And delighted us and made us daydream. Most of us who got married in the 1950s did so as if we were Alceu's son-in-law. We talked, sat on benches in Squares; strolled the streets hand in hand; kissed in the movies, and danced 'our song' at balls [...] . And later our girlfriend would give us an album with all the songs from the hit parade. Every page was decorated with the face of one of the Garotas. On the first page of the album, they copied 'our song' whether a 'bolero' by Gregorio Barrios or a fox-trot by Nat King Cole<sup>85</sup>*



Alceu Penna's figures were always beautiful, glamorous and up-to-date in fashion and behaviour and seemed to epitomise the glories of modernity: their clothes, hairdressers, vocabulary, were widely copied by teenage girls all over the country.<sup>86</sup> Although Penna's figures are collectively called "As Garotas" (literally The Girls) their alleged plurality is open to question.<sup>87</sup> "As Garotas" are also just one – no name, no story, singularity or individuality. Their paradigmatic identity was also stated in



rhymes by the author:

*[ being] Fair, tanned or brunette  
Tall, chubby or petite  
all the girls have their own  
beauty.  
When seeing them together,  
man must thoroughly think  
about the decision  
and blindly choose any of  
them.<sup>88</sup>*

In his reasoning Penna merely echoed a popular male assumption: women are not individuals, but exchangeable goods, as in the popular maxim "Women are like street-cars. If you miss one you can always take the next." That is, it does

<sup>85</sup> Ziraldo 'Alceu Penna !' in *Garotas do Alceu*, *ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> The cartoons of this page: *O Cruzeiro* 32 (15):70, 23/1/1960; *Catalogue As Garotas do Alceu*, *ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> As Ann Clark had pointed out " Girl" is – the multifaceted ever-present character in modern publicity. CLARK, 1987.

<sup>88</sup> Alceu Penna 'Garotas para Escolher,' *O Cruzeiro*, 23 (30):78-79, 12/6/1959.

not matter which woman a man chooses to marry, because they are all the same.

In spite of their lack of personal singularity, *As Garotas* remained unique in what they represented: freedom, modernity, progress – all the values envisaged in the making of Brazil as the modern country:

*“she is able to do, be and choose anything whatsoever, whatever she is offered: Swiss formula, Helene Curtiss, L’Oréal. She lives anywhere – anywhere that is in a democracy. This allows her democratic choice: any kind of cheeseburger says the American Dairy Association [...]”*<sup>89</sup>



*Mutatis mutandis*,<sup>90</sup> this is the way Alceu's figures were pictured. *As Garotas* lived in Copacabana, were perfectly integrated in the new, incipient consumer society. As the figures in the advertisements, they acquired the skills to consume the newly available products, pointing up to the rest of the country how to lead a modern life ( even housewifery, as in these cartoons).<sup>91</sup>

In the best tradition of the manuals, the *Garotas* do not need to develop intellectual skills, or to be involved with politics, current news, or even domestic issues. They fitted well the stereotype of the beautiful girl with low intellect – they are charmingly voluble, vain, irresponsible and empty-headed:

<sup>89</sup> CLARK, 1987:195.

<sup>90</sup> There are real similarities, since the same trade marks were also available in Brazil in the 1950s, only then Girls ate hot dogs, cheeseburgers were introduced later in Brazil.

<sup>91</sup> *O Cruzeiro* 27 (41):70-71, 23/7/1955.



The girl represents the goodness of naiveté; she is 'apolitical.' She has no opinions except about herself. This is what makes her normal and normative. She represents little bits of information as interesting [...] Complex or systematic explanations are unintelligible: 'so intense, 'too dull'.<sup>88</sup>



The *Garotas* are candidate in the election.<sup>86</sup> Her 'electoral program' repeats all the stereotypes about woman's political view point and interests: against the 'sac dresses',<sup>87</sup> in favour of cheaper cosmetics, fewer single women.

Every week Alceu Penna took a new theme to be developed by the *Garotas* or a different situation where they would be involved. It does not matter which it was, all themes and situations would be translated in terms of the '*Garotas*' lack of interest in anything but choosing the best suitor – a rich, modern, charming prince having all the signs of affluence of modern society. In fact, these girls had marriage as their only goal in life.

Therefore, the modernity of The *Garotas* – cheered by many as it was pointed out – instead of representing the possibility of change, they represented the reinforcement of the same stereotypes and prejudices enveloped in the traditional pattern of feminine role, just like any other ridiculous figure of the other male cartoonists.

<sup>86</sup> *Catálogo* *ibid*. Several times, Alceu looked the elections issue under the stereotypical viewpoint that women is led by non rational details in choosing a candidate. In '*Garotas têm Candidato*' they declare their intention to vote only in handsome bachelors, relatives and *namorados*. The author concludes in funny rhymes:– "Thus the *Garotas* will succeed in providing a bunch of handsome scoundrels for the Congress." *O Cruzeiro* 26 (51):62-63, 2/10/1954.

<sup>87</sup> A fashion of the time.

<sup>88</sup> CLARK, 1987:201.

## Conclusion

The importance of including this material in a text about women's imaginary is that it could be regarded as its counterpoint. Carlos Zéfiro emphasised the ideal male role from which derived its pedagogical aspect: in an environment of much stress over male sexual performance, adolescent boys learned how a '*macho mesmo*' behaved with any woman or male homosexuals. This idealisation was only made possible because the setting of the stories was peopled of whores, sexually unsatisfied wives and sexually curious virgins all of them eagerly waiting for a '*garanhão*.' A male fantasy taken to the extreme. As it deals with male sexual fantasies, it provides an interesting view about 'the others',<sup>1</sup> 'the adulterous woman', those who transgress, sin, or fail to fulfil the model that society imposed on them. They also exemplify the stereotyped male view point that the honour of all the supposedly rightful women is always put into question: where are the limits of their virtue, is it strong enough to resist the seduction of a powerful '*macho*'? The clarification of these doubts provides the grounds for all of Zéfiro's booklets.<sup>2</sup>

In a way *Amigo da Onça* is related to Zéfiro's heroes because he also played with male fantasies about his own role. The expected social conduct of a man is constrained by norms of courtesy and honourable behaviour towards women, who expect physical and moral protection from upright man. *Amigo da Onça* is a man above such conventions: he allows himself to be unruly, an adult who often behaves as a mischievous child. Conversely woman in these stories are bound by norms and rules and from such conflict derives *Amigo da Onça*'s humour.

In an environment which dictates that women's happiness depends on man, and that to conquer him she must be young, beautiful and seductive,<sup>3</sup> man's opinion about her look is of utmost importance. In the same way woman must stay patiently at his disposition, never going after man. The male manipulation of such situation was very common, making woman stay endlessly waiting for him — recognised tactics of seduction to increase

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<sup>1</sup> As these booklets were not destined for a feminine public, the male figures reflect man's fantasies, anguishes and standards about male role and body, that is the ideal of a sexually over potent man with a penis of exaggerated size, epitomised in Zéfiro's story '*João Cavalo*' (believed to have 'a third leg.')

<sup>2</sup> These booklets are also an exception to the bulk of material analysed here, because for the others cartoonists, whores are never the theme of humour whilst almost all the patterns of feminine roles are broken down. It is easy to understand why: it is common sense that once defiled woman's honour can not be restored again, thus there is no use in inverting a whore's role. It is well exemplified by the novel *Luclola*. See footnote 4 of this chapter.

<sup>3</sup> Even the authors of religious manuals took it for granted: Desmarais says: *nature made woman dependent on man. Moreover it made her young beautiful and seductive in order to attract man*. See chapter 4 of this thesis.

woman's love. *Amigo da Onça*<sup>4</sup> succeeded in frustrating women's confidence, and their possibilities of happiness, fulfilling male fantasies of maintaining illimitable power over them.

*Amigo da Onça* also plays with the masculine desire of having a voyeuristic access to woman's intimacy which must be veiled from all men but the husband. These stories reveal male fantasies about mischievous possibilities of fulfilling such desire: a floor made of mirrors, a job behind a lingerie counter, the incidental undressing of a virginal bride; or a beautiful shipwreck survivor girl at his entire disposition on a desert island. In a lighter form *Amigo da Onça's* behaviour is analogous to Zéfiro's heroes.

A less optimistic view of the male role is found in Carlos Estevão's cartoons. He pictured man entrapped by the social expectations of his role. Contrary to the others who showed the over potent man; his cartoons displayed the ways that women have to subvert such power. However he also display a bitter portray of woman, making ironies of the common sense about female capacities, such as feminine intuition or their non aggressiveness.<sup>5</sup> He puts into question the cherished theme of romantic love and the ever lasting happiness in marriage, contrary to the happy-ending cliché of fairy tales, novels and Hollywood films.<sup>6</sup>

In his cartoons he ironises the efforts of ordinary woman to fulfil the new expectations for the feminine role, stressing the ridicule of the situation. Women are caricatured as frivolous, empty-headed, jealous, non-rational, envious, greedy beings. They are either tyrannical wives, or abjectly submissive ones.<sup>7</sup>

Thus on the one side, there is the sacred institution of marriage and family, and the respect awarded to its figures: the Wife, the Husband, the Children, and above all the Family. On the other side, there is the de-sacralization of familial relationships, chiefly the conjugal one in these cartoons and comics. It is possible to draw an analogy with Radcliffe Brown's theme of joking relationships,<sup>8</sup> since these jokes which supposedly de-sacralised conjugal relationship were not only consented to, but also accepted and stimulated. In spite of the virulence of some of the critics, which in other contexts could be regarded as offensive, these jokes, by having as raw material scenes that, although very exaggerated

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<sup>4</sup> He acts as a naughty boy who says loudly what by courtesy no one dares to say.

<sup>5</sup> See for instance in ESTEVÃO, 1986: '*Briga de Mulheres*' (Women's quarrel): 7; '*Intuição Feminina*' (Feminine Intuition): 26-27; '*As 4 Vizinhas*' (The Four Neighbour Women): 28-29.

<sup>6</sup> As in the series *Mulher Ciumenta* ( Jealous Woman), ESTEVÃO, *ibid.*: 40-43; '*A Ronda das Chiquinhas*', *O Cruzeiro*, 27(41): 48-49, 23/7/1955.

<sup>7</sup> As in the series "To be a wife is..." It is important to note that woman's submission is taken to the limit, in an absurd and totally fanciful way. On the other hand its counterpoint 'To be a woman is not,' provides a good account of what was fashionable in Rio de Janeiro, then, such as Calypso, lambreta, the writer Françoise Sagan, the singer Harry Belafonte and so on.

<sup>8</sup> Of course I am aware that he described cases in African unilineal societies, the analogy therefore remains limited to the theme.

could allow some form of identification for the reader. Again, as these jokes stayed within the limits of what was socially accepted, they were an instrument for the reinforcement of familial structure and of the family as an institution. Whether this form of criticism also opened an opportunity for the challenging, either of a particular familial situation, or the institution in itself, remains opens to question.

## Chapter 7

# *Fashioning Modernity*

## *Building The New Feminine Body*

The religious discourse about woman's body and beauty preached modesty and considered the discourse of publicity as the vulgarisation of feminine character. At the same time, publicity and the mass media promoted new images of woman - at first glance - opposed to the religious ideal. They helped to adapt the female body to a pattern imposed as beautiful and sexually desirable. The aim here is to examine how the search for this ideal of beauty can be regarded as a sign of modernity, and to explore the way in which it generated a particular kind of feminine knowledge and expertise; how consumerism linked beauty to health and hygiene and how this was legitimated by scientific discourse.

The majority of beauty products were imported, as was their publicity. However, the major international agencies of propaganda were already established in Brazil,<sup>1</sup> contracting Brazilian professionals who adapted the language of advertisements to local culture, and to the things which were locally up-to-date.<sup>2</sup>

A similar adaptation gradually took place in religious discourse, which tried to adjust doctrine to these 'new times'. Religion still imposed modesty on woman, labelling sexuality either as sacred (in wedlock), or as a transgression, whilst advertisements drew a new image of woman emphasising seduction as the key element of femininity. Without totally breaking with cultural patterns, advertisements gradually introduced subtle changes and transformations. As a result, both discourses – from religious literature and publicity – although in opposition, worked together for the 'domestication' of seduction.

It will be argued that besides commodities these advertisements promoted new values regarded as signs of a new life style. These values were science and technology as opposed to common sense and home-made goods; the celebration of speed, simplicity, modernity, youth, seduction and romance.

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<sup>1</sup> Such as MacCanErickson and Thompson.

<sup>2</sup> . A good example is the launching of a new colour of lipstick named *Morango* (Strawberry) in 1958. *Morango* was the exotic surname of Miss Brazil who also advertised the product, making clear the connotation.

## *Antecedents*

In the Brazilian inter-war period eugenic medical discourse still prevailed. Because of their ideal of racial improvement, the medical establishment encouraged breast-feeding, and emphasised the importance of physical culture and sports as moral, religious and patriotic elements.<sup>3</sup> Health was equated with beauty, and the 'natural look' without artificiality was advocated. Everything concerning fashion was looked upon with suspicion, since they conceived it as anti-natural and cause of disturbances in the 'delicate machine that was feminine body.' This discourse still could be found in the religious didactic literature for girls, in the 1950s. For instance, Soares D'Azevedo says<sup>4</sup>:

*[H]igh heels, girdles too attached to the abdomen, the abuse of creams and cosmetics, elastic bands creating difficulties for the blood circulation; tight dresses. All of these aberrations in modern women's attire are the cause of much harassment and organic malfunctions.*

In spite of all criticism, women went on changing their life style; incorporating fashion and the use of cosmetics into their daily life. Dulcilia Buitoni reported that, in the Brazilian 1920s, "make up was restricted to brushing the face with red (damp) paper and around the eyes with powdered coal; with the help of a little clasp passed in the flame of a candle, they could simulate a little mole in the cheek."<sup>5</sup> However, this information contradicts Susan Besse's research. For this author, in the 1920s there was already an array of creams and make-up products available for the middle- to upper-class woman, according to the magazines she researched.<sup>6</sup> Consumption of these goods increased to the point that "in 1953 Brazilian had spent approximately: CR\$ 90 millions on embellishing creams, 150 millions on lipsticks; 60 millions on 'blush' and 100 millions on rice powder."<sup>7</sup> The amount of other goods for purposes of comparison is not given. This in turn shows that the 'new image of women' had prevailed in spite of religious criticism and warnings.

## *Beauty in Advertising*

The 1950s were a period of absolute optimism about human supremacy over nature, and absolute faith in the power of science. Science and technology, at the service of health and hygiene, had released people from their old fears about incurable and mortal disease; there was hope that, in a not too distant future, humankind would be liberated from such ailments.

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<sup>3</sup> See BESSE, 1983.

<sup>4</sup> D'AZEVEDO, 1949: 51.

<sup>5</sup> BUITONI :45.

<sup>6</sup> BESSE, 1983: 1st chapter.

<sup>7</sup> *A Batalha da Beleza*. Manchete (108):32, 15/5/54.

Housewives had already learned that the health of their children could be compromised if their meals were not well-balanced. The same applied to their pretty home – a possible incubator of contamination for the family, if not meticulously cleaned on a daily basis.<sup>8</sup> Compulsive sterilisation of everything was part of the daily duty of those who had a baby at home.

Consequently, two complementary ideas had been well assimilated: a kind of impotence towards the environment and one's own body and health resulting from the existence of invisible and powerful elements, balanced by the possibility of controlling them, with the help of scientific knowledge and correct procedures.

Advertisements reaffirmed this kind of belief, stressing the danger of such 'invisible enemies.' They used a vague and ambiguous language full of menaces, exhorting the public to use their product. There was no alternative for the readers but to fear either "invisible bacteria which provoke decay" as the "microscopic greasy elements, which blocked the pores causing black spots and pimples".

"The language of each culture does not so much name the world, as defines its possibilities."<sup>9</sup> In western cultures, it is the language of consumerism that defines the world around us, channels our physical perceptions, defines our daily life.<sup>10</sup> Thus it also determines what beauty means, "creating new categories out of previously undifferentiated areas of experience."<sup>11</sup> According to publicity, beauty meant "clear, fresh, firm skin without pimples, black spots and wrinkles" and "silky, soft and fluffy hair." achieved with the aid of a "deep and restorative cleansing" obtained with the putatively right products. Therefore, the classification of a woman as beautiful depends on the success with which she conforms to a model imposed by advertisements,<sup>12</sup> that is to say to a model conditioned by the language in which it was enunciated and by the specific knowledge it discriminated.

## *Science and Sorcery in Beauty Care*

In that environment of mysterious and imprecise dangers and concerns, it is little wonder that, similarly, products had imprecise and mysterious elements, responsible for their virtues.

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<sup>8</sup> Advertisements of Band-Aid (*Johnson & Johnson*) and Lifebuoy soap terrorized housewives about the dangers of contamination of their children, if the proper product was not used for their hygiene

<sup>9</sup> Marshall Sahlins also reminds us that "in Western culture the economy is the main site of symbolic production." SAHLINS, 1976: 211.

<sup>10</sup> As Judith Williamson has pointed out, one "may hold out against buying a conditioner as well as a shampoo – but I cannot wish it out of my existence, or ignore the fact that it is associated with healthy, shining hair and that this is desirable." WILLIAMSON, 1985:226.

<sup>11</sup> WILLIAMSON, 1985 :225.

<sup>12</sup> The 1950s had been a period of more conformism to standards of fashion and behaviour than the 1960s and 1970s would be.

Towards the end of the decade, some advertisements started to display evidence of scientific value. The virtues of a product were due to exclusive, scientific or hidden, elements in their formula with strange names: 'Eusterol', 'Enamelon', 'Permacromo', 'Lanolite', 'Karanuva' and 'S.R. element'.<sup>13</sup> Neither the value of these 'elements', nor the causes of blemishes and decay need be contested when arguing that this use of scientific terms is ideological. Advertisements connote science by using a language which is obscure for the readers.<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless they believe in it as if it were a myth.<sup>15</sup>

The use of technical words in advertisements enacts similar function. It was part of a fantasy, in this case a 'scientific fantasy'. They provided only the necessary information to distinguish a particular product from similars, so that the product would become more special, desirable and saleable. This kind of discourse reduced problems, its causes and cures to the same magic level. A very good example is this implausible dialogue in an advertisement of a toothpaste:

[Brother] – *Dear sister, what does an anti-enzymatic action mean?*

[Sister] – *Mum said this is a new weapon Kolynos uses to fight bad breathe and decay.*

[Brother] – *Is Kolynos magical?*

[Sister] – *Kolynos protects the teeth all day long with an invisible film which avoids decay. It looks like magic... Being magic or not, daddy said we will have better teeth when we are grown up...from the benefits of Kolynos.*<sup>16</sup>

In this case, the advertisers use simultaneously three powerful arguments: science,<sup>17</sup> spell and mother's omniscience (*Mum said...*). At a time of absolute faith in science, displaying the result of tests and inquiries among consumers was another way of proving the veracity of their affirmation. For instance, *Palmolive* claimed that

*"1285 women of all ages and skin types, oriented by 36 specialists, had tried the Palmolive Embellishing Method. In 14 days, 2 out of 3 of them had achieved remarkable results."*<sup>18</sup>

<sup>13</sup> These elements refer respectively to the following products: *Lipstick Artez Westeley*; *Cutex Nail Polishing*; *Lipstick Tangee*, *Rice powder Kadija*, *Colgate Lipstick Toothpaste Lever*.

<sup>14</sup> RODRIGUES, 1979.

<sup>15</sup> This is the case for the belief in the extra power of something that has "micro foam with microscopic bubbles micronized through air action. Rice Powder Air Spun, Coty, *Cinelândia* 5 (87): 27, June 1956. WILLIAMSON (1978) discuss the idea of alchemy implicit in advertisements which claims that smallness guarantees the magic property of a product.(pp 145-147).

<sup>16</sup> In a corner of the advertisement there is a text explaining: "*Scientists divored that decay and bad breathe are caused by enzymes of bacterial origin.*" However it was preceded by the information that "*a new miraculous ingredient*" had been added to Kolynos. *O Cruzeiro* 12/355. Another advertisement of Kolynos shows a little girl merrily announcing: Mum says that it is almost magic. *Cinelândia* 4 (55)51, February 1955

<sup>17</sup> For instance, 'The well-known *Lactobacillus Acidophillys Odontolyticus*'. Kolynos toothpaste. *O Jornal das Moças* 1840: 64; 21/9/50.

<sup>18</sup> Gessy soap, *O Jornal das Moças* ( 1819 ): 67, 27/4/ 50; Palmolive soap, *Cinelândia* 7 (128):35 March 1958. Palmolive talc *Cinelândia* 8 (156): 18; May 1959. This tendency was also followed in the advertisements of other types of products such as Singer Sewing Machine ( "more than 100 years of tradition and the preference of 150 millions of consumers ") *Cinelândia* 8 (153):39 August 1959; ) "More than a million homes had greater comfort because of Walita" (electric appliances) *O Cruzeiro* 31 (22):72; 14/3/59.



There is also a kind of spell in the pronunciation of orders of numbers as in some popular sorcery. Naturally, nobody bothered to explain how, where, when they had achieved such numbers or results. Likewise, in this information very little was in fact explained or learned. But advertisements helped to build a corpus of truisms dressed up by a 'scientific' label which became part of common-sense. And they created an environment of pseudo-rationalism and scientific mystique in women's daily lives, which played an important part in the construction of modern woman's role; and to the Brazilian middle classes, one more step towards modernization.

## *Beauty and Hygiene*

Beauty was no longer regarded as a gift of nature. Rather, it became something available to everyone. Women had not only the right, but "the obligation to become beautiful"<sup>19</sup> with the help of devices invented in the 'modern industrialised world': "Those women who remain ugly in spite of having the means to avoid being so, are committing a hideous sin," warned an advertisement.<sup>20</sup>

Beauty as a duty was also reinforced by the association made between it and hygiene: "The secret of her beauty is the cleanness of her skin."<sup>21</sup> Advertisements not only made that association as they also established its nature: hygiene was not the prosaic purpose which everyone knew – the one achieved by the everyday use of water and soap. The hygiene for beautification fragmented the body, determining a specific kind of product for each of its parts – soap, facial cream, shampoo.<sup>22</sup>

Dirtiness no longer possessed an undifferentiated nature: it became possible to distinguish its parts,<sup>23</sup> some of them would remain concealed, 'subterranean,' almost invisible. According to Roland Barthes, every advertisement of cleansing products and cosmetics brought about this image of profundity. Dirtiness was not something to be taken off a surface, but removed from the most secluded hiding-places. Thus, cleansing products might clean deeply, nourish deeply and remove deep obstructions; that is, at any rate they should be able to penetrate.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, because of the layers of skin, advertisements persuade women that "they are the result of a kind of a germinating circuit, where the

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<sup>19</sup> Creme de Alface Brilhante (Brilliant Cream of Lettuce) *O Jornal das Moças* 1/6/50:74.

<sup>20</sup> Brazilian *Creme Pollah*

<sup>21</sup> "O segredo de sua beleza é a limpeza de sua pele!" (Leite de Colonia) *Querida* (67):25; March 1957.

<sup>22</sup> The competition between these products or their trade marks cannot be forgotten as a major reason in that outlining of the embellished hygiene. Decoding these subtleties gradually became part of the consumer's common knowledge.

<sup>23</sup> For instance, 'grease, dust and dandruff', as proclaimed in a shampoo advertisement.

<sup>24</sup> "...le produit, lui prescrivait de nettoyer en profondeur, de débarrasser en profondeur, de nourrir en profondeur, bref, coûte que coûte, de s'infiltrer." We must remember that Roland Barthes wrote the articles included in his *Mythologies* between 1952 and 1956. It means that the idea of profundity claimed in those advertisements was quite new, at that time. BARTHES, 1970: 93.

beauty of the bloom depends on the nutrition of their roots.”<sup>25</sup> As a result several kinds of skin care, and their vocabularies, were incorporated to their daily routine: the deep cleansing, nourishing, toning, and from the end of the decade on, the moisturising the skin.<sup>26</sup>

According to the advertisements of other products, soap was good for general hygiene, but it was insufficient for achieving both hygiene and beauty. Moreover, it could even spoil the result. Contrary to creams and shampoos, soap increased the dangers for the skin and for the hair since it took off 'the protective elements leaving the hidden particles' into the pores, and making the hair opaque and lifeless. Only shampoos had a “magic and creamy.” or “a richer and penetrating” foam capable of completing its cleanness.<sup>27</sup>

Contradicting the advertisements of facial creams, soaps also proclaimed their embellishing virtues Their “delicate”, “soothing,” “creamy and toned”<sup>28</sup> foam could bring “youth and beauty,” and the “additional care” one should have; emulating film stars who “knew why they use” the soap “preferred by 9 out of 10 film stars.”<sup>29</sup>

The competition between products or trade marks cannot be forgotten in that outlining of the embellished hygiene. Decoding these subtleties defined by consumerism gradually became part of Brazilian middle class common knowledge.<sup>30</sup>

## *The Beauty Ideal*

At the beginning of the decade there was an enormous difference between the advertisements of Brazilian products and those of large international companies. However, the small national producers gradually learnt how 'modern' publicity was created. Up to the end of the decade there was a tendency towards homogenisation of language and appeal. It is argued that those differences implied on the making of different images of woman.

*The advertisements of 'Antisardina,'* a cheap and popular facial cream, provide a good example of such changes in publicity. At the beginning of the decade, their advertisements used Parnasian images – such as references to Greek mythology — and

<sup>25</sup> “...de persuader aux femmes qu’elles sont le produit d’une sorte de circuit germinatif où la beauté des efflorescences dépend de la nutrition des racines.” BARTHES, 1970:93.

<sup>26</sup> In 1958, for the first time, Helena Rubinstein advertised Skin dew to prevent skin of becoming very dry. *Cinelândia* 8 (150):9 February 1959. That was the first advertisement of moisturizer I could find.

<sup>27</sup> Respectively Shampoo Halo *Capricho* 7 (77):9, July.1958; Helene Curtis, *Cinderela* 261:36, 23/11/57; Shampoo Schauma, *Cinelândia* 7 (128):18, March 1958; Mulsifield Shampoo, *Querida* 6 (74):67, June. 1957.

<sup>28</sup> Respectively Lever soap, Gessy soap, *Cinelândia* 8 (150):19, February 1959; Palmolive soap , *Querida* 6 (74): 35 June 1957.

<sup>29</sup> That was the well known publicity of *Sabonete Lever* (Lux) introduced in Brazil in 1934. Their marketing strategy was to promise “beauty femininity, quality, glamour and luxury. Those attributes were transferred to the trade mark through the image of Hollywood stars.[Nelson Blecher , ‘As Bolhas da Sorte, *Folha de São Paulo*, 28/5/ 1989:26-29].

<sup>30</sup> WILLIAMSON, 1985:226

words with poetic connotation. However, the result is an unintentional parody of poetry composed by a combination of meaningless phrases:

*Sinfonia de Amor*

VALERANDO E SONHADO, Cupido inspira  
 FANTASIAS DE CORAÇÃO EMOCIONADAS...

U esta fantasia de teu coração é bordada pela  
 tua própria beleza, quando usas ANTISARDINA

**ANTISARDINA**

Sei corar por Cupido, a cismar a vida  
 do amor... para ter  
 beleza em flor.

*Antisardina*  
 te convida a bailar...  
 renovando teus irresistíveis encantos.

### **Symphony of Love**

*Waltzing and dreaming, Eros inspires fantasies in lovely hearts.*

*And if you use Antisardina, this fantasy of your heart will be embroidered in your own beauty.*

*Antisardina had been praised by Eros, in order to dream a life of love for your blooming radiance... Antisardina invites you to dance, renewing your irresistible charms.... Antisardina invites you to dream, by protecting the loveliness of your complexion... Use Antisardina to conquer another heart.<sup>1</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> 'Sinfonia de Amor,' *Vida Doméstica* 33 (419): back cover February 1953.

### Realizable dream

*Nature reserved to woman, vestal of beauty, the sublime mission of projecting golden rays and alluring sunrises in a green garden of magnificent dreams.*

*Antisardina is this glowing dream, this sun full of wonder, spontaneously radiating all the desires and ideals of a beautiful woman.*

Compared with other advertisements, the above seems old-fashioned not only for its nineteenth-century images. It shows a pre-scientific conception of beauty. Beauty is represented as something transcendental, beyond scrutiny, improvement, or ever achievement. The product is an additional element to a kind of sorcery: it is a “glowing dream”, and a “sun full of wonder.”

**troque  
um minuto diário  
por beleza e saúde!**

Antisardina é um creme de beleza cientificamente preparado, com três diferentes formulações, que nutre as células, limpa e clareia a epiderme! É uma garantia para ter uma pele saudável e bonita.

**Antisardina**

MADE IN ITALY

STRA. 4 - CORRETORE ANTONIO DI VIGORIO - 20122 MILANO - ITALIA

**“EXCHANGE 1 MINUTE A DAY FOR BEAUTY AND HEALTH”**  
Antisardina is a beauty preparation, which is **scientifically** prepared in three different formulations. Antisardina **nourishes the cells, cleans and clears the epidermis!** It is a guarantee for having a healthy and beautiful

<sup>32</sup> Cinelândia 8 (150): 67, February 1959.

In 1959, the publicity of the product abandoned its 'pre-scientific' approach for a more up-to-date scientific discourse, as it is seen in the advertisement. This is far removed from the imprecise pseudo-Parnasian vocabulary of the earlier 1950s to this one. Not only woman, but *Antisardina* had assimilated the 'scientific veracity' of beauty care. Beauty is a goal to be achieved with the use of the right product.

There is also a great difference between the conception of woman in these advertisements. A 'vestal of beauty' does not need to be assured about the effects of the cream on her skin. The same 'vestal of beauty' gradually was transformed into the 'modern' woman, faithful to the unlimited power of science put at the service of her daily life. She believed deeply that a new era had been inaugurated which would bring progress, development, and, most of all, new models for her role. She intended to learn how to be 'a better consumer' adjusting to 'the new times', participating in its riches. Along with these products, she was actually buying modernity, youth, romance and seduction.

## *Menstruation And Modernity*

The 1950s. are represented as a time of ruptures: modernity, progress and development were the key words of the day. But how were these ideas 'sold' to the people ? How were they perceived, and how were they embodied by women in their daily lives ?

No product other than absorbents could be more associated with modernity. They were represented as a radical disruption of woman's bygone practices<sup>33</sup> – something that changed woman's life style. Therefore, publicity used every image which could stress either the idea of rupture or modernity.

It seems that the product started to be sold at the turn of the 1940s. Headlines such as "No Woman Should Put Her Health at Risk" ( using old-fashioned devices condemned by Science) introduced *Modess* as being 'the scientific solution for the oldest feminine problem.'<sup>34</sup> However, its publicity increased with the creation of *Seleções* ('*Reader's Digest*') in 1943, when the product start to be sold among other modern devices – the marvellous apparatuses of a free, democratic, new world. Thus, Brazilian readers became used to the periphrasis and metaphors used to announce the excellence of such novelty. They exhorted the reader :

*Enjoy your life the year long (without worrying about certain days of the month.);*" *Enjoy all the days of your holidays without worries and fears;*"*Nobody would guess...indeed she spent every day of the month without any kind of worries..."*

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<sup>33</sup> The first product was *Modess* from *Johnson & Johnson*. The company was the pioneers and dominated market in such a way that the trade mark became a synonym of the product in general.

<sup>34</sup> Respectively, *Jornal das Moças* (1204):67, 14/7/1938.



Enjoy the whole 15 days of your holidays



Enjoy your life the whole year.

Whilst these advertisements associated the product with leisure, holidays and pleasures, the following ones warned the professional women against 'bad humour' at the workplace.<sup>36</sup>



The stenographed page was translated: "Lucia, our boss already noted your bad humour. Take from my drawer my box of Modess...."



"Maybe you don't know! You don't need to be less polite on certain days of the month"

<sup>36</sup> Seleções, respectively July and August 1943.

It is not necessary to stress how much the images denoted modernity. However, these advertisements also sell shame to women and their power derives "from the way it marries the slick advertising techniques of modern times with the strictures of an ancient taboo against menstruating women."<sup>37</sup>

Etiquette dictated that women should behave as if menstruation did not occur; above all, she should not draw any attention from men, except her partner in a stable heterosexual relationship.<sup>38</sup> Whilst it must be hidden from men, menstruation generates a kind of complicity among women. They shared a corpus of conventional wisdom about menstruation from which they had empirical evidence: such as predisposition to pimples; avoiding beating egg whites, mayonnaise or cakes;<sup>39</sup> or hairstyles not going right as well. From these limitations and small inadequacies arise the feeling that menstruation was a curse over woman's condition

It is worth remembering an anecdote from the Brazilian folklore:

*'When God was creating women, He gave them 'the rule of the months'. Saint Peter at his side, felt sorry for them, and asked: My Lord why do you give this to women? And God answered Pete: – Because men would make a mess of themselves...Women are neater than men...Besides women will wear skirts... They will know better how to hide it from others.'*<sup>40</sup>

This popular account crystallizes common views about gender roles. There is no doubt that menstruation is an issue to be hidden, at any price; that men are grown-up children, and left by themselves they would live as if they were in a pigsty; tidiness and modesty are essentially feminine virtues. More than just a description of what she knows as reality, Maria Marcelina put in God's hands the only possible explanation for what was represented as an unequal division of the human burden.<sup>41</sup>

Menstruation was a woman's issue to be hidden from every man, just as it was a matter of contempt. There was a proper code for speaking about it – common words from

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<sup>37</sup> TRENEMAN, 1988, :154

<sup>38</sup> Even then, Sophie Laws says, it is a matter of the man making a concession, it is he, not she, who makes the decision to break the rules, that is to say, that he signals whether it is an issue to be brought up or not." Woman is not in a position to decide that she can ignore the normal etiquette in regard to a particular man without risking offending his masculinity. LAWS, 1990:51.

<sup>39</sup> Yvonne Verdier points out similar interdictions in a French village: "aussi, périodiquement, les femmes sont-elles astreintes à un véritable interdit: défense leur est faite de descendre à la cave où sont entreposés dans la nuit, la fraîcheur humide et le silence, les bocaux de cornichons, les pots de haricots salés, la haute jarre de grès ou le tonneau qui abritent le lard, les barriques de vin, de pique et de goutte ... Il s'agit d'un pouvoir putrifiant. ... On peut donc faire la cuisine: 'ça ne gêne pas' à l' exception cependant d'un certain type de préparations: ' les gateaux, les crèmes, c'est pas possible! Une femme n'ira pas non plus faire une mayonnaise ni monter des blancs en neige comme ça, ça ne prendre pas.' VERDIER, 1979:19-20.

<sup>40</sup> Personal communication, from Maria Marcelina, an elder, illiterate black woman from the countryside, M.G. 1974.

<sup>41</sup> This is a very common representation. A painful childbirth could popularly be explained in the following terms - "it must be a girl, for woman always suffer, even before being born;" as an overdue deliver could be attributed to being a boy - "because men are lazy, they like to making women work for them."

daily vocabulary usually used to name anything else, quite distant from that theme.<sup>42</sup> There was an atmosphere of affliction surrounding the issue; fear of the embarrassing stains; fear of the disruption brought by the woman's touch; fear of her secret being exposed.<sup>43</sup>

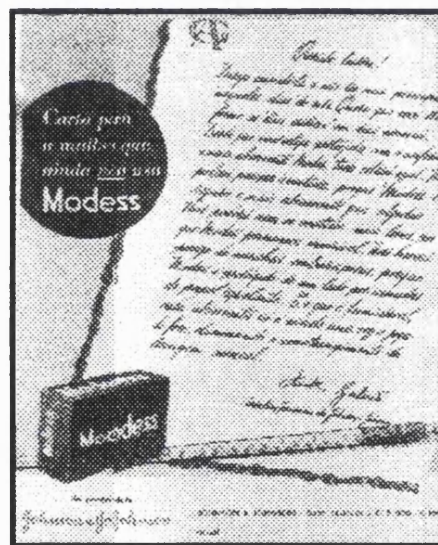
Codified gestures commanded the way to sit, dress and behave. Paradoxically, such cares signaled what they should conceal. And there were the unmistakable homemade sanitary wear hanging on the lines every month, telling the tale to everyone.<sup>44</sup> Thus, *Modess* must have looked quite revolutionary: Discarding instead of washing and total efficiency in concealing the problem in any circumstance, moreover it was comfortable and cheap.

In advertisements the word menstruation or its popular synonyms do not appear. Instead they speak of 'critical days', 'those days', 'embarrassing stains' – truly examples of circumlocution and implicit discourse. Sophie Laws questions the idea of 'protection' present in those advertisements: "Who or what is to be protected with *sanitary protection*?"<sup>45</sup> These points reinforce her argument that the etiquette of menstruation was dictated by men, inspired by them, having men always in mind, commanding every gesture and thought. She also emphasises the ideas of pollution, dirtiness that go along with representations about menstruation.

### *The Novelty of the Product*

The first task of publicity was to introduce the product and its advantages persuading the public to try out the 'novelty'. At the end of the 1940s they stressed the [embarrassing] situation lived by those still using home-made absorbents. The advertisements sketched daily situations in form of women's small-talk.

In 1950, the authorised discourse of an 'expert' Anita Galvão<sup>46</sup> substituted such small-talk



<sup>42</sup> Menstruation is considered one of the richest words in synonyms in Brazilian Portuguese. Such as in English, popularly menstruation is called '*regras*' (rule); *período* (period); *incomodo* (nuisance) *bode* (billy-goat); *visita* (visit); *Chico* (men's nickname), among other names.

<sup>43</sup> it was believed that a man could have a clue just holding her hands.

<sup>44</sup> In LAWS, 1990 's research about male's viewpoint over menstruation, it becomes quite clear. They seemed to decodify quite well subtle signs such as differences in the way women behave; differences in her skin and in her appearance in general.

<sup>45</sup> LAWS, *ibid.*:45. However, the idea of protection goes beyond the menstruation issue. Perhaps the concealment of body which lasted until the twentieth century remained in the masking of body smells. Toothpaste protects against bad breathe, deodorant, against body odours. An advertisement of Lyfebuoy soap assured "a fragrant protection that will last for many hours" *O Cruzeiro* 28 (30):68, 5/51956.

<sup>46</sup> In the first advertisements, the leaflets were offered by Dna. Mary Kelly and were called "What a Modern Woman Must Know. " Soon the supposed advisor was substituted by a Brazilian name.

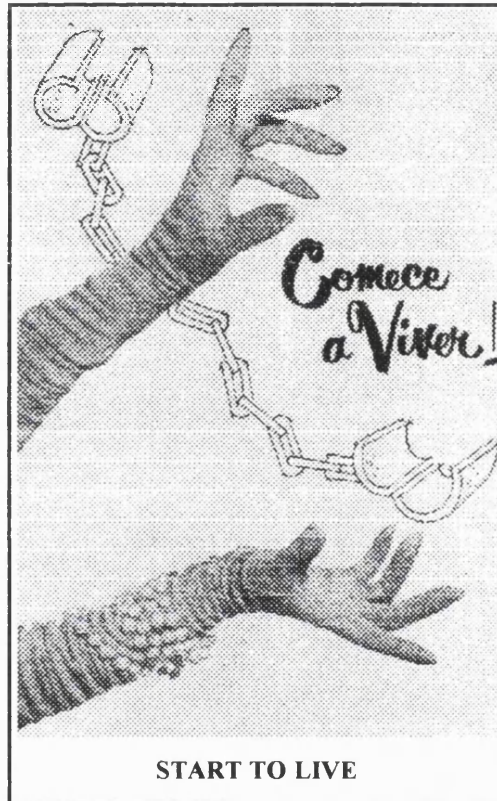


with advertisements which took the form of elegant letters from the 'consultant,' offering samples of the product as a final argument to the still recalcitrant readers.<sup>47</sup>

From that time on this kind of inducement – whether by friends or experts – disappeared from the advertisements. Perhaps the manufacturers were sure that everyone already recognised its peculiarities. In the 1950s, therefore, the product was associated with an up-to-date life style suggesting modernity, fashion and freedom.

### *Freedom And Modernity*

Women in *Modess* advertisements were projected as feeling free. Although this idea underlies every advertisement, it became more evident in the 1955 campaign. Under the headline 'Start to Live!' they used every sign connected to prison such as iron bars, handcuffs, barbed wire, a heavy chain with a ball and the iron door of a cell<sup>48</sup>. Advertisements pictured smartly dressed women, each one using the appropriate attire for a special occasion. Their faces are not shown, only the necessary gestures for achieving the desired freedom are displayed – all of them surprisingly easy:: it is enough a small scissors to cut the barbed wire, iron bars



are separated by bare hands, small gestures get rid of a chain ball or extricate gloved hands from handcuffs.<sup>49</sup> Advertisements show a disproportion between the gesture and the achieved purpose, making clearer the message: freedom is easily achieved when one starts using the product.

What is the meaning of freedom in this kind of advertisement? For them, to be freed from the worries of leakage and the burden of monthly washing, epitomised woman's freedom. That is why it is so easy to cut the metaphorical barbed wire-fences or to prize

<sup>47</sup> Monogrammed paper, with stylish character as if written by fountain pen. 'Carta para a mulher que ainda não usa *Modess*. ' *Jornal das Moças*, (1819):8, April, 27/4/50. Anita Galvão's name was already known to the readers, since it used to appear in the corner of every advertisement, offering leaflets about the product. According to the anthropologist Maria Cecília S. Costa, 'Anita Galvão' became synonymous with menstruation among her school friends, in Curitiba, PR.

<sup>48</sup> All of these advertisements had the same headline - " *Comece a Viver!* " (Literally, Start to Live!). They were respectively published at *Revista do Rádio* (313):18; 10/9/1953; *Ibid* 8 (309):33; 13/8/ 1955; *Ibid*. (311):10; 27./8/ 1955; *Cinelândia*, 4 (64):8; July 1955; *Ibid*.4 (55):53, February 1955.

<sup>49</sup> As Ann Treneman says, "the advertisement industry listened to our mother's whispers (menstruation is a burden that must be hidden) and transformed them into fact (the embarrassing ball with a chain) and then used its imagery."<sup>49</sup>



START TO LIVE



START TO LIVE

open iron bars. Women need only ordinary devices like scissors, or bare hands to achieve this. To be freed from the old-fashioned burden is effortless – that is the message of such advertisements.

And that is why women are so smartly dressed in them. Stilettos and ball dresses are incompatible with hard work, and this fact reinforces the message. As Ann Treneman points out, they manipulate these concepts “to seduce us into thinking that there is a ready-made individual cure to what is, in fact, a societal curse.”<sup>53</sup>



START TO LIVE

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.:158.

# Sexual Education

From 1954 to 1956 the emphasis of the advertisements radically changed for a time. Instead of the previous smartly dressed, self-confident women, they showed shy pre-teens, sometimes protectively embraced by their mother's arms. The headlines were gravid with suggestivity. In bold letters they warned:

**'Some things'... That YOUR DAUGHTER MUST KNOW!**<sup>54</sup>

Your daughter can be **TOO ASHAMED TO ASK...**<sup>56</sup>

**A Sra. deve contar à sua filha...**

Antes que ela seja de fato, para muitas a menstruação é um assunto difícil e desconhecido. Muitas vezes, até a primeira menstruação, há uma certa timidez e vergonha. Isso acontece porque a mulher não sabe o que é e como lidar com isso. É normal, mas não deve ser. A Sra. deve contar à sua filha... e ela aprenderá a lidar com isso de forma adequada.

Para ajudar, vamos mostrar-lhe que não há nada de vergonha nisso. É apenas um processo natural e necessário. Não se envergonhe de perguntar. É melhor perguntar agora do que depois. Assim, você poderá lidar com isso de forma adequada e sem problemas.

De mais, perguntar é bom. É uma maneira de aprender e crescer. Não se envergonhe de perguntar. É melhor perguntar agora do que depois. Assim, você poderá lidar com isso de forma adequada e sem problemas.

Se quiser saber mais, escreva para: Modess, Caixa Postal 8036 - São Paulo, SP - Brasil. Telefone: (011) 509-3003.

**Grátis!** Um pacote Modess... e um folheto informativo. Envie este cupom para: Modess, Caixa Postal 8036 - São Paulo, SP - Brasil. Telefone: (011) 509-3003.

Nome: \_\_\_\_\_  
Endereço: \_\_\_\_\_

You **MUST TELL** your daughter...<sup>57</sup>

Don't let **YOUR** daughter learn about it from **SOMEBODY ELSE**<sup>58</sup>

Professionals of mass media in general, have the skill of picking up an up-to-date theme and disseminating its debate among the public in general. Usually they take from them no more than the more visible or easily identifiable signs. Thus they create in a cliché out of what was previously seen to be vanguard.<sup>59</sup>

**Um dia, sua filha fará 'certas perguntas'**

Que responderá Mãe?

Essa pergunta. Mais dia, menos dia, V. terá que explicar à sua filha "certas coisas" inevitáveis: como a vida feminina — e a melhor que ela apresenta em meio ao que "pode estar feio"... Para ajudá-la nesse tarefa, não lhe ofereçamos um indispensável livro, escrito de forma discreta e compreensiva. Mas lhe ofereçamos a sua filha aprenderá muito.

Entre outras coisas, aprenderá que "mesquinha não é o uso de Modess" e indispensável para a sua saúde... o que, no contrário dos métodos antigos, Modess e suas ligaduras — não se deve usar só — é mais conveniente — não precisa ser lavada todas as vezes — é mais discreta — não apertam, mesmo sob os vestidos mais leves.

E V. sabe que tudo isso custaria mais ou menos, R\$20,00 por mês?

As crianças, não precisam explicar... basta dizer Modess.

**Grátis!** Um pacote Modess... e um folheto informativo. Envie este cupom para: Modess, Caixa Postal 8036 - São Paulo, SP - Brasil. Telefone: (011) 509-3003.

Nome: \_\_\_\_\_  
Endereço: \_\_\_\_\_

Someday your daughter will ask you **'SOME QUESTIONS.'** And what will you give her as an answer?<sup>54</sup>

An analogous process occurred in such advertisements part of the debate about sexual education — a polemical issue in the 1950s. From the headlines it seemed that sexual education had been removed from

<sup>54</sup> Um dia sua filha fará 'certas perguntas.' *Revista do Radio* (240) :42 , 17/4/ 1954. Illustration on the right.

<sup>55</sup> 'certas coisas'... que sua filha deve saber ! *Cinelandia* 3(38) , 1954 .

<sup>56</sup> 'Sua filha pode ter receio de perguntar,' *Cinelandia* 4(58) :14, April 1955.

<sup>57</sup> A Sra. **deve contar** à sua filha, *Revista do Radio* (359): 28/7/56. Illustration on the left.

<sup>58</sup> **Não deixe sua filha aprender com outros!** *Revista do Radio* (374) :32, 10/11/ 1956.

<sup>59</sup> ECO, 1970, MARCHAND, 1985.

schools and churches to be discussed in popular magazines. Headlines synthesised the key phrases of the debate – children too ashamed to ask; the need to answering all the questions; frank debate about the issue. That is to say the need to substitute ignorance (as the path to virtue) with knowledge as the necessary instrument to avoid the 'dangers' of sex.<sup>61</sup>

However, there is no correspondence between text and headline. So what looks like 'sexual education' was merely publicity of a booklet meaningfully named *'Almost a woman...and happy.'* In spite of its modern proposal, its very name signals how much these advertisements were rooted in old prejudices; in the idea that female physiology is a curse, which can be mitigated with the use of the right product.

Apparently 'sexual education' was the reproduction among the younger generation, of using *Modess*. However, its educational purpose cannot be denied nor can it be denied that it was an advance, since mothers did not speak about 'such facts' to their daughters. As Ann Treneman

points out, the advertisements succeeded in breaking the silence over the issue. But they were promoted and constructed in such a way that the very thing they were breaking

**"Filha  
minha  
jamais...  
adotará métodos  
antiquados...!"**



"Confesso que sinto falta de algumas coisas dos bons tempos de outrora... mas, devo dizer que, em muitos pontos, a vida de hoje é bem melhor suas confortável. So para dar um exemplo: nos meus tempos de jovem, a questão da proteção higiênica em "certos dias do mês" era realmente um problema. Hoje, porém, o método moderno e o que pode haver de mais higiênico, mais confortável, mais seguro e mais conveniente. Refiro-me a Modess, é claro!

Fico satisfeita em saber que, com Modess – que é usado uma vez e jogada fora – minhas filhas eliminaram para sempre o desagradável problema da lavagem mensal. Agrada-me saber que minhas filhas não se sentem constrangidas "nâqueles dias", pois Modess é seguro, confortável e invisível mesmo sob os vestidos mais justos.

Estaria eu pagando demais por esse conforto das minhas filhas? Pois custa-me pouco mais por mês do que uma entrada de cinema. E o conforto delas me vale muito mais do que isso.

Ao comprar, não é preciso explicar – basta dizer Modess.



**GRÁTIS!** "Ser quase mulher... é ser feliz" - Um livro responde a muitas perguntas que fazem sobre a menstruação. Anja Galvão - Ed. P. S&C - Depo. Esp. N&S - São Paulo

Nome .....

Endereço .....

**"My daughter will never...[adopt old fashioned methods]"<sup>60</sup>**

<sup>60</sup> *Cinelandia* 3 (30) :13, February 1954.

<sup>61</sup> See chapter 4

ultimately remained intact.<sup>62</sup> The key to understanding this whole campaign is the emphatic statement of a mother in one of the advertisements which exposes quite well the breaking with the past.

*I confess that I miss some of the things of the old good days... but I must also concede that, in many points, living today is better and more comfortable. Just an example: when I was a teenage hygienic protection on 'some days of the month' was really a problem. But not today, since the modern method is really the most hygienic, comfortable, convenient and the safest that one can have.....I am really happy knowing that my daughters will banish forever the disagreeable task of monthly washing .... I am pleased to know that my daughters won't feel any sort of constrain, even on 'those days'....*

*Would I be paying too much for my daughters' comfort? Of course not, for it costs less than a cinema ticket each month. And their comfort is worth much more than that.*

It can be reasonably imagined that many mothers subscribed to these views. For there was a genuine intention to give their daughters a 'modern' conception of living. Presumably, this intention could be materialised in the gesture of giving them a box of sanitary towels, as suggested by the advertisement.

For this very reason Ann Treneman's criticisms, can not entirely be shared in terms of Brazilian woman's experience: the advertiser did amplify a taboo that already existed in society. In reality, the excellence of the product came from the possibility of building a more efficient environment of shame and silence to surround a menstruating woman.

However, this image also broke with the image of menstruation as illness. In the 1950s, the so-called 'women's medicines', or '*Reguladores*'<sup>63</sup> associated menstruation with "dismay, discouragement, ill humour, palpitations, anxiety, emotional exaltation, headaches and more serious healthy problems" — ailments supposed to contribute in the ageing process.<sup>64</sup> '*Reguladores*' were associated with youth, thus, marking those who took the medicine ("women who did not show their age"<sup>65</sup>) and those who did not. ("young ladies who looked like elderly women"<sup>66</sup>). Taking these medicines was, according to the advertisements, the secret of "happiness and well-being, every day of the month."<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> TRENEMAN, 1988: 160.

<sup>63</sup> Literally 'regulators'

<sup>64</sup> 'Depression ...Discouragement...' (*Regulador Gesteira*) *O Cruzeiro*, 18/10/ 1952 .

<sup>65</sup> Mulheres que não mostram a idade...(Regulador Fontoura) *Cinelândia*, 7 (128):28 ; March 1958.

<sup>66</sup> Moças que parecem velhas... (Regulador Fontoura) *Cinelândia* 6 (112):34, July 1957.

<sup>67</sup> Alegre e bem disposta... (Regulador Eugynol) *O Cruzeiro* 26 (34):72, 5/6/1954.

This advertisements of the most popular of these medicines show a woman in a night-gown, lying in bed, looking as in pain and discomfort. According to the title she must also feel guilty (perhaps of being a woman).

The idea that a woman's body was a defective mechanism was implicit in the very name of this kind of medicine – regulators. Likewise, the notion that the reproductive organs, govern everything in female life, was also implied.<sup>68</sup> The same idea still prevailed in some religious manuals which feared too much study, sports or physical efforts for girls, in the name of a possible derangement of the 'female organism'.<sup>69</sup>

The marketing of products destined for feminine



*" Her guilt would be stronger if she only knew that the medicine could be so easily at hand."*<sup>67</sup>



*"I was a very fortunate wife...Now he wants to leave me!..."* The advertisers invite the readers to infer the paradoxical cause: *"Could she be an ageing young wife?"*

intimate hygiene' followed the same line. The advertisement on the left lists several ailments caused by not using the product: frigidity, indisposition, indifference, early ageing.<sup>70</sup> In this sense publicity for sanitary towels did 'modernise' the way menstruation was perceived by women.

<sup>67</sup> Illustration on the right. *O Cruzeiro*, 28/10 1950 :26. At the end of the decade, the publicity of this product took a more positive approach: the illustration was a charming girl with a tennis racquet under the headline 'Healthier Months.' *O Cruzeiro*, 12/5/1956.

<sup>68</sup> In the Rose Franken's novels several times this issue is brought up to mockery. See chapter 5 of this thesis.

<sup>69</sup> See chapter 4 of this thesis.

<sup>70</sup> 'Eu era a mais feliz das esposas...hoje ele me abandona' 'Lysoform' *O Cruzeiro* 12/4/ 1947 :4.

## *The Teenage Girl*

Following the tendency of the decade introduced by Hollywood – 'teenagerism'<sup>2</sup> – advertisements of absorbents also inaugurated the adolescent as their new target. Therefore, the image of youth, and its life style, substituted previous signs of fashion and luxury, identified with a more mature public. After the theme of sexual education came ' the 1956 girl' who went to the funfair, or on a picnic and who was well escorted to the movies. The advertising message emphasises how those girls have already broken with past feelings and attitudes : The reason why is that such old-fashioned attitudes do not match their qualities: Cheerfulness! ... Confidence!... Good feelings



**THE 1956 GIRL GOES TO THE MOVIES.** "Missing the last movie is an idea which never ever could pass through her mind. Staying at home? Sad, discouraged ... on such a beautiful day? No! This cannot happen to our modern girl!..."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Picture on the left. 'A garota 1956 vai ao cinema,' *Cinelândia*, 5 (87) :9 June 1956.

<sup>2</sup> For films with/about adolescence in the 1950s, see DOHERTY, 1988. For the stereotypes of adolescent girls in Hollywood see ROSEN, 1975 :283 - 286.

The advertisement for a similar product – also taking teenage life style as theme – assured the readers: “Confidence comes from knowledge!”<sup>76</sup> All of these scenes played with signs of modernity: the smiling teacher sitting on the table among a group of teenagers, had her informal attitude implicitly contrasted with the traditional, severe hierarchical pattern of relationship in the schools. The other advertisement plays with signs of status – at the time cars were still imported, very expensive, thus, out of the reach of the majority of middle-class families. Woman driving a car was also a sign of modernity.<sup>77</sup>



Her friends rely on her because they already know her well.



“The students rely on her advice ... because they already know her qualities as a teacher.”

<sup>76</sup> Literally, those who know can trust (it/her) The slogan is intentionally ambiguous.: The authors played with the use of an implicit object in the phrase, as it is commonly used in Brazilian informal language. The meaning is doubled to indicate *those who knows them can trust* either the product or the person in the picture. ‘Quem conhece...confia’ . Respectively : *Cinelandia*, 6 (101) :57, January 1957 ; *Cinelandia* 5 (91) :5, August 1956; *Cinelandia*, 5 (86) :49; June 1956.

<sup>77</sup> The message is ambiguous: it is not possible to know whether one trusts friends in general, or only when a woman is close friend ( and thus her expertise is well known) one dare to take a lift in her car, since it is a common joke that women are bad drivers.



The last advertisement is specially significant. It plays around two scenes – a joyful chat between mother and daughter and two teenagers embraced: there is no means to know whether the girl is the same and nothing in the text links the two scenes. However, the publishers know that their readers would easily connect both and they make clear that this positive feeling is due to their product.<sup>78</sup> The girl and her presumed boyfriend are possibly the theme of the chat between mother and daughter. Contrary to previous *Modess* publicity, Mother is not campaigning for the new product. She is playing the role of the greatest friend a girl can have, to whom the daughter must speak about everything, even about dates and boy friends. (and, moreover, about sanitary wear). This kind of situation can be seen in its own as a sign of modernity. To understand this inference it is necessary to put it in the context of the patterns of courtship in the Brazilian patriarchal family.

- quem conhece...  
*confia!*

Todas confiam nos seus conselhos, porque conhecem as suas virtudes de mãe. Os melhores homens, todos usam Miss - e os melhores as autoridades da Miss - confiam em sua proteção. Miss é mais higiênica, mais econômica, e a melhor para o momento!

Exija a mais moderna proteção feminina, conhecida mundialmente, sem qualquer inconveniente.

Miss - 100% algodão - 20 unidades - em seu tubo - preço reduzido - no supermercado!

**industrias york s.a.**  
produtos plásticos

RUA PAZ ARHITO NUNFANG, 425 - TEL. 50.1010 - C. POSTAL 8485 - SÃO PAULO

Depositar em qualquer banco

**"Everybody trusts her's advice, because they know her motherly virtues."**

<sup>78</sup> Everyone trust mother's counsels, because they know her virtues. In the same way, everyone who use Miss - and already know its qualities can rely on it .....



***"She is modern, she enjoys her life: She is a leader – for her ideas, for the way she dresses, for the way she lives...."***

relationship between the couple – on the one hand he is playing the chivalrous role, the expected educated male attitude. However, it also denotes an equalitarian acquaintanceship. All of these signs connote a breaking up with old patterns.

In the second, as in the antecedent the main figure is in complete contrast with the background figure: a shy and lonely girl, who could not ask for a lift with such a skirt; probably nor would she have anyone to whom she could wave good-bye or with whom she could share a modern, enjoyable life. It is noteworthy that after the murder of Aida Curi the image of a girl on a lambreta started to have negative connotations.<sup>80</sup>

The image of a young lady, informal and up-to-date in her attitudes prevailed in the new advertisements. The headline and text made it quite clear and were used for different situations. These two have particular interest for this analysis.<sup>79</sup>

In the first, two are the visible signs of modernity: many books denotes a very studious pupil, a role that was particularly required of men, and less of women, and the scene suggested mixed schooling. And finally there is the



***"She is modern, she enjoys her life: She is a leader – for her ideas, for the way she dresses, for the way she lives...."***

<sup>79</sup> *Seleções* 34 (201) : 89, October 1958, *Capricho*, 7 (77) : 91, July 1958, respectively.

<sup>80</sup> See chapter 1. This advertisement was published in the same month of the crime.

## *Youth as a Sign of Beauty and Modernity.*

In the 1950s the tendency to link youth and beauty had already been established in popular representations.<sup>81</sup> Youth was 'largely sold' by the advertisements of cosmetics. Products signalled the democratisation of rejuvenescence, promoting what Edgard Morin called "the new trinity – Love, beauty and youth."<sup>82</sup> ageing was not regarded as being synonymous with wisdom, deserving respect and esteem. On the contrary, the ideal figure gradually became the 'juvenile adult' whether 20 or 50 years old: one should remain young (at least in spirit) until death.

Thus, a Brazilian perfume assured that "a beautiful woman has no age"<sup>83</sup> whilst a hair application warned: "Grey hair? Well, your hair is exaggerating your age." Youth was not a matter of age or feeling; it was only a question of appearance purchased in association with the right products. The effect should be immediate for no-one had time to lose: "exchange 1 minute a day for beauty and health; Get rid of blemishes. [Using Ponds] your skin will immediately look fresher, softer and younger!"

It is possible that youth became a more dramatic need in the 1950s, since it was a decade when adolescents were especially in evidence.<sup>84</sup> Hollywood *teenagerism* provided models for everyday life such as the stereotype of the nice-girl-next door as created by Debbie Reynolds. From these images, Brazilian girls copied dresses, hairstyles and read advice on beauty or about teenager's problems. Films and magazines referred frequently to teenager's life style, which was eagerly emulated by Brazilian middle to upper class teenagers.<sup>85</sup>

A new life style for middle-class adolescent girls was inaugurated through mixed schools, the practice of sports, and new accomplishments for girls: ballet classes; English substituting the compulsory French; guitar and accordion replacing the once near-

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<sup>81</sup> Susan Besse stressed the link between beauty and youth made by cosmetic advertisements in the Brazilian inter-war period. This represents a span of 16 years, and unclear whether it holds for the whole period or only of a particular decade. For instance, Marilyn Lake pointed out that this association was made in Australia as late as the 1930s. BESSE, 1983.

<sup>82</sup> MORIN, 1969:159.

<sup>83</sup> Respectively: '*Água de Junquilha*.' *O Jornal das Moças* (1892):22, 20/9/ 1951; '*Loção Juvenia*,' *ibid.*:73; *Ponds*, *Cinelândia* (8): 117, September 1957.

<sup>84</sup> Claudio De Cicco analysing the influence of American Movies in the Brazilian 1940s, pointed out the gap between generations brought by the cinema. The young generation easily adopted new habits, hairstyles, clothes, and even incorporated some English words to their vocabulary, creating a youth life style. CICCIO, 1975.

<sup>85</sup> For the Hollywoodian invention of teenagerism see chapter 4. For the films with/about adolescence in the 1950s, see DOHERTY, 1988. For the stereotypes of adolescent girls see ROSEN, 1975: 283 - 286.

compulsory piano – an expensive and mammoth instrument for a middle-class budget and flat.<sup>86</sup> Consequently, new patterns of behaviour, and of relationships with men, were also introduced. The boundaries of what was considered proper for a 'family girl' became more flexible, but it did not change the distinction between them (drags) and 'the others' (slags).

## *Sports and Beauty Contests*

The cult of physical beauty went far beyond the physical education classes, that were part of the national curriculum.<sup>87</sup> Long gone were the days when physical education for girls had been considered an outrage against feminine modesty. In 1938 the '*Confederação Católica Brasileira de Educação*' inveighed against medical examination and the files of student's body measurements, said of no scientific value. Moreover, the process of obtaining the data represented "an injury to feminine natural modesty."<sup>88</sup>

Nevertheless, since the 'Estado Novo' (1930-1945) where the ideal of a "warrior like male body and the mothering female one" represented the hegemony of eugenics: the obligation of Physical Education and to practise sports at schools were regarded as a necessary instrument to improve the "Brazilian race."<sup>89</sup>

In the 1950s, there was no more controversy over this issue, even if religious manuals still echoed the old polemics.<sup>90</sup> Physical culture was no longer restricted to schools: gymnastics classes were broadcast on the radio and beaches were a favourite space for such activities.<sup>91</sup> Practising sports became a must for young men,<sup>92</sup> and ballet classes

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<sup>86</sup> It can be speculated that two new possibilities were open for projects of upward mobility through middle-class daughters: either emulating traditional education ministered to upper-class girls (traditional convents and accomplishments) or breaking up with it, looking for a 'modern education' in mixed schools (several of them of American Protestant origin) and substituting traditional by modern achievements.

<sup>87</sup> In the 1950s one still could read in religious manual criticisms against "the deplorable orientation given to the Physical Education at schools: its nasty files are an inducement for the path of evil. Parent's silence about these issues can be considered criminal." SOUSA, 1958:239.

<sup>88</sup> As Fulvia Rosemberg argues: *What could be behind the determinations of that Catholic report? An agitation provoked by the idea of male doctors what had been a kind of gynaeceum: fantasies provoked by the possibility of sexual gratification from the manipulations.* ROSEMBERG, PIZA & MONTENEGRO 1990:130.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid..

<sup>90</sup> Actually in the 1950s those manuals had already had several editions. Readers still read old arguments which were reinforced by more traditional Catholic sectors. For instance, SOUSA, 1958 was in its sixth edition then.

<sup>91</sup> *Contemporary teenagers are indebted to Hollywood's bathing girls' [from the 1920s], for a new universal pattern for feminine beauty.[...] after them came this revolution; this one which transforms any adolescent into a happy animal with long legs, healthy teeth, hard muscles, golden skin and a slim waist. This teenage girl laughs at the mention of fainting heroines, who died of love in romantic novels.* Elsie Lessa, 'Em louvor da menina esportiva,' *Querida*, 2 (26):19, June 1955.

<sup>92</sup> Among men, many favoured body shaping, emulating the American Charles Atlas. *Nosso Século*, v 8: 10.

became part of the social accomplishment of well-educated girls, in some middle-class groups.

In Rio de Janeiro an Olympiad among clubs and secondary schools named *Jogos da Primavera* (The Spring Games) was set up. Some schools became nationally famous because of their brilliant participation, repeated year after year. Not only they did present skilled athletes, they exaggerated in their participation at the opening of the games: allegorical floats with beautiful girls in swimming suits and chiefly the performance of their beautiful acrobatic drum majorettes. The zenith of this Olympiad was the contest to select the Queen of the Games – not the most skilled athlete, but the most beautiful one, with as perfect body measurements as possible. Afterwards these queens always easily won the competition either for Miss Rio de Janeiro, or Miss Estado do Rio.<sup>93</sup> This nexus between the contests reveals the ambivalence surrounding the Olympiad. Whereas magazines marvelled at the 'Festival of Healthy Young'<sup>94</sup>, not everyone shared this view. In 1955, a magazine complained about "some corrupt minded individuals" who behaved there as if it were just a 'sex appeal' exhibition. The magazine advocated a campaign of 'mental hygiene:' to refine the public, giving a "mental 'cleansing' for those who were looking for "a satisfaction of their instincts" instead of marvelling at the 'festival of eugenics.'<sup>95</sup>

For a male public, who had only recently grown accustomed to 'beauty contests,' it was not easy to deal with this sort of ambivalence: patterns for feminine modesty had not changed: girls in maillots on the beaches and in beauty contests were regarded as quite different issues.

Schools which excelled in these games ended up with a reputation of paying much more attention to sports than to studies. They were lay, co-educational schools and in general, had an modernistic ethos.<sup>96</sup> Parents who enrolled their daughters in such schools were in a way breaking with patterns of traditional feminine roles.

### *Possible Trajectories of Beauty Queen Careers*

Beauty contests opened up many possibilities for candidates, chiefly careers as film stars. However, contestants would not dare to assume that marriage and lots of children

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<sup>93</sup> Actually none of the '*Rainha dos Jogos da Primavera*' ever succeeded in becoming Miss Brazil, in spite of always being among the five finalists.

<sup>94</sup> Health meant both physical fitness, and a 'clean' mind.

<sup>95</sup> In this context, individual is a pejorative way of referring to men. *Revista da Semana*, 40, October 1, 1955.

<sup>96</sup> In the 1950s there were several co-educational private schools in Brazil, including many founded by American Protestant Churches. Convents were not regarded as the only suitable school for girls, although they were still favoured by most traditional families. Co-educational schools were regarded as more up-to-date, more appropriate for a modern and changing society.

were not her most cherished dream. The idea that only marriage and maternity could fulfil a woman's vocation had been well assimilated since an early age.

Being a 'Miss', summed up the ambiguities which surrounded the prospective role of a modern young lady: They epitomised fashion and modernity, challenged previous standards for the woman's role and played the role of housewives-to-be in their major project for life. A report about the 1955 Miss Brazil nominees stated: "Needless to say they intend to marry and have lots of children. That's their dream as the ordinary girls they are. None has any ambition of becoming a new Ava Gardner or Pearl Buck."<sup>97</sup> Or else, they did not entertain hopes of becoming artists or intellectuals, but aspired only to being plain housewives. .<sup>98</sup> This kind of image was important to reinforce their 'good-girl' qualities neutralising their aura of modernity. since girls who decided to run for a Miss Brazil contest, had already broken up with conventional behaviour. That is why they emphasised:

*It is not enough to be 18 to 28 years old, beautiful, elegant and gracious as the rules state. More is required. We do require irreproachable moral behaviour. This contest is inspired by the highest values. So we intend to appoint a girl who really could represent all Brazilian girls, as much in their physical gifts as in their education, intelligence and moral reputation.*<sup>99</sup>

These beauty careers did not always end as the parents had foreseen. Two other social categories emerged then: the 'cocktail girl' and the 'call-girl', the first being a step for the second. A cocktail-girl was generally from the lower middle classes, who lived among high society as a way of securing a rich husband. "It has become more evident in the last years, as a consequence of the modernisation of our social milieu, and its exaltation of luxury, pleasures and personal vanity."<sup>100</sup>

*[T]he principal way of becoming a cocktail-girl is a beauty contest. Our press feeds these contests because it is thirsty for beautiful girls in swimming suits to fill the pages of newspapers and magazines. They have to find a way of replacing the starlets which our embryonic cinema cannot supply.*<sup>101</sup>

<sup>97</sup> 'Finalmente Miss Brasil' *O Cruzeiro* 27 (38):94, July. 2, 1955.

<sup>98</sup> Martha Rocha reveals her refusal to invitations from Hollywood for the same reason: "*It must seem quite ingenuous and ordinary. But marrying and having lots of children, that was my dream.*" ROCHA, *ibid.*:84. Few would dare to repeat Therezinha Morango's confession, that in fact she wanted lots of publicity to smooth her path to an artistic career. She was the Miss Brasil 1957. *Revista da Semana*, 28, 7, 7/1957.

<sup>99</sup> 'A Batalha da Beleza', *O Cruzeiro*, 28 (30) 5/5/1956. However, their conduct anticipated their times: *in 'bars' all around the town people gossiped about Martha Rocha and her sisters – all of them very beautiful. Offensive tales: gossip about their close friendship with American men; their habits of chatting with men, getting a lift in their cars [...] What's the problem? Why was it a sin? Today these things are regarded as plain and innocent. But not in the Bahia of the 1950s.* (João Ubaldo Ribeiro, writer, in *Martha Rocha*: 34). Actually her behaviour was quite unconventional for traditional patterns. In her recent biography she reveals having run away home, when she was 16 to know Rio and meet a 'namorado'; and also that she was not virgin anymore when elected Miss Brazil. For the dichotomous patterns of that time, no doubt she was on the side of 'the others', not of the 'family girls.'

<sup>100</sup> 'Cocktail-girl ... Call-girl,' *Manchete*, 7 (371): 79-80, 30/5/1959.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*.

The evidence of parents participating in this kind of project greatly surprised the journalist. First, they massively invested in the daughter's education although the majority did not studied in the more prestigious Convent schools, such as the Sacré Coeur or Sion.<sup>102</sup> They were expected to learn a bit of English and French at expensive language schools,<sup>103</sup> although it was ironically reported that their 'expertise' was acquired through American music and Hollywood or French movies.

Their parents did not hesitate to incur huge debts, if it represented luxury attire for their daughter, as a way to compensate frustrations for their mediocre life. It represented a shift in the patterns of parental role regarding the education of daughters, for the transgression it introduced of the traditional ideal of woman's modesty. Instead of holding her back in the privacy of the home, they helped their daughter to attain a position of prominence in the public sphere – even if it cost her reputation:

*A 'cocktail girl' dares everything to claim attentions. To fulfil her intentions, she always counts with the support of her parents. She tries anything: cinema, television, theatre. She never hesitates before browsing around newspaper and magazine publishers, to get some gossip published about her – even 'against' her. No one, even the most ambitious politician, knows how to use personal publicity as the cocktail-girl does. The only career she wants is that of being a rich and elegant woman. '*

If she succeeded in securing a rich husband it would be “the death of the cocktail girl, for she would be reborn as the great lady, referred in the social columns, as she belonged to the 'four hundred year' dynasty.”<sup>104</sup>

In a retrospective report, social columnist Ibrahim Sued considered that being a 'Miss Elegant Bangu' brought luck for the candidates:

*“these ex-Miss Bangu nowadays are good housewives and mothers pursuing the tradition and objective of this contest for the Brazilian family.”*

His text is accompanied by photographs of those ex-Miss Bangu as luxuriously dressed brides, helping to increase the Cinderella fantasy, which surrounded these contest. Sued omitted to explain, however, that the majority or all of those girls belonged to rich families, and already had good chances to meet good (rich) suitors, whether Miss Elegant or not.

He also listed some “previously unknown girls,” who [although not securing a good marriage] had become part of 'café-society' (as a booby-prize). Possibly they were

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<sup>102</sup> A few families even make substantial sacrifices to send them to a Swiss school.

<sup>103</sup> Martha Rocha reported that her father, was a “man who never showed any affection for his (11) children.” Nevertheless he invested in food and education for them. So she had studied at “one of the best secondary schools ... and learned several languages, English, Spanish and German.”

<sup>104</sup> A Four-hundred-year dynasty is a reference to the first families who came to colonize Brazil. It is a synonymous of 'traditional', of being part of a very exclusive elite.

examples of the beauty-contest-made 'cocktail girls,' before mentioned. In reality very few cocktail-girls succeeded in acquiring the desired rich husband. Most became call-girls, a private prostitute, under the cover of a legitimate profession such as dancer, mannequin, singer, secretary.

*Becoming a 'call-girl' is the major danger for those girls who had decided to use their charm, their sagacity and intelligence to get a rich husband. Their parents think that they had done the best for her: chaperoned her to the first parties and beauty contests – at the cost of sweat and tears; spending nights awake, waiting for her return, For them there will be nothing but sorrows and revolt when they discover that terrible changing of names [from 'cocktail-girl's to 'call-girls']. But generally everything is made in deep secrecy. A secrecy that the closest relatives are the last to discover<sup>105</sup>*

Thus, these beauty contests opened up other possibilities for life projects, which went beyond marrying and becoming a plain good housewife, as their mothers and grandmothers had been. Instead, they could dream of becoming a film star, a mannequin, or even the wife of a rich man. However, these projects of upward mobility most probably would end in elegant and discreet forms of prostitution.

## *Conclusion*

The aim of this chapter was to show how messages from magazines and the beauty industry worked towards the construction of a beautiful recognisable feminine body, reinforcing a "disciplinary project of bodily perfection." This disciplinary project had a dual nature: it was socially imposed through the mass media; and deeply embodied by women as an ideal reachable through the use of the right products. Differences of race, age, class probably made women perceive and answer that ideal in different ways.<sup>106</sup>

The feminine body was beautified through hygienic practices simultaneously specialised and scientific: Specific products for each part of the body and the emphasis in the 'scientific' importance of treating the inner body to the beautification of the outer body.<sup>107</sup> Each advertisement claims that its product provides an 'answer' to a 'problem,' but in reality "the product itself defines the problem it claims to solve,"<sup>108</sup> thus the creation of products for beauty care defined the ideal of beauty rather than the inverse.

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<sup>105</sup> 'Cocktail-girl ... Call-girl,' *Manchete*, 7 (371):79-80, 30/5/ 1959.

<sup>106</sup> To the middle class, magazines displayed an upper- class universe (the Cafe Society and Hollywood stars.) Perhaps a closer look to the analogous petty Radio Stars Olympia would more clearly reveal the effect of these messages upon a public less cosmopolite, of lower class background, of recent upward mobility. Such analysis is out of my limits now.

<sup>107</sup> For the distinction of the inner and outer body, see FEATHERSTONE, 1982.

<sup>108</sup> WILLIAMSON, 1985:225.



O Coração Bate  
com  
Baton  
Colgate

Qual o tipo  
das suas lábios?

Descubra qual dos perfumes  
é o seu mais adequado para  
BACONIS - a última novidade  
do BATON COLGATE.

A delicada variedade de  
CORADOS dá pontos a todos  
dos seus lábios.

Faça a diferença e escolha  
o superior BATON COLGATE  
com um perfume adequado ao  
momento.

O Coração Bate com  
Baton Colgate

Find a new personality  
for your lips with the new  
Pinkie Lipstick. Which  
type of lips do you have:  
aristocratic, sensual,  
romantic, sincere or  
cheerful?<sup>109</sup>

In the 1950s, a beautiful woman was 'conscientious consumer'.<sup>110</sup> She was ready to assume new 'worries' and 'needs', and consumed new 'solutions' to new problems. Everything had to match orthodox standards decreed by Paris or Hollywood.<sup>111</sup> They determined fashionable colours, the height of the hem, size of hats and handbags, hairstyles and an extensive list of don'ts. In addition, there was a perfume for each personality, a colour of lipstick for each type of lips. Rules and formality made the ritual of fashion and beauty care very strict, time demanding, and requiring specific knowledge, which would later become part of common sense.

It was argued that modernity was especially 'sold' to the feminine public by advertisements of sanitary towels. Texts brought a strong idea of breaking with the past, its habits, feelings and attitudes. In fact the pretend modernity of the product was not only rooted in, it also amplified old prejudices. However, such pretence undoubtedly aided in dismissing the idea that menstruation was a disease.<sup>112</sup>

Youth was also transformed into a commodity to be purchased with such cosmetics. The cult of woman's beauty together with youth, in an environment of Hollywood appeals, made beauty contests the fashion of the decade. Fitness was to be achieved through the practice of sports and Olympiads for secondary students mobilised thousands of youngsters. These contests opened up other possibilities for life projects they could dream of becoming a film star, a mannequin, or even the wife of a rich man. However, these projects of upward mobility often

<sup>109</sup> 'The Heart throbs with Baton Colgate' *O Jornal das Moças* 1892 :67, 20/9/51.

<sup>110</sup> One who knows the difference of using soap, shampoo or cream; who had learned that the skin must be cleansed (not washed) toned, and nourished, using a specific product according to the particular type of skin.

<sup>111</sup> Women tried to follow as closely as possible patterns dictated from the Northern Hemisphere and very different life styles. Although without the same thoroughness as at the turn of the century, fashionable people had to emulate European style of dressing. Formal dressing for social situations was much more common for middle class than nowadays. The cocktail dress was invented, at that time as a semi-formal attire. Women were to use hat and gloves for weddings and graduations, hat and furs, whilst men's should be wearing suits made in English wool fabrics even in the warmer September weather. For the emulation of European clothes at turn-of-the-century see NEEDEL, 1987: 166-171.

<sup>112</sup> It goes beyond the limits of this thesis to analyse how much a woman subscribed the affirmatives about the advantages of the product.

ended in elegant and discreet forms of prostitution.

These advertisements sold 'modernity' as something desirable. Thus products appeared associated with signs of an upper-crust way of living, replicating fashion pages of the magazines, showing how to be properly dressed on each occasion. Modernity was associated to freedom, the career woman, the debate over sexual education and the teenager's life style, thus it was part of the fantasy vicariously consumed.

## Chapter 8

### *The Seductive Object*

The feminine religious ideal had to be adapted to the discourse of the mass media which put in check the traditional pattern of femininity. Changes in the pattern of woman's participation in the labour market, allowing a daily companionship between man and woman, were perceived as threatening to marital stability. In order to improve the competition between modern career woman and traditional housewives, seduction had to be 'domesticated' making woman a seductive object and elevating the image of Eve to the position of an ambiguous feminine ideal.

### *The Traditional Religious View Point*

Religious discourse about virginity structured the religious perception about woman's role in a broader sense than the mere repression of sexuality. Christianity inherited from the classical world the idea "that virginity was powerful magic and conferred strength and ritual purity."<sup>1</sup> as the legends of martyrs were utilised to prove. This magic power was due to the integrity of the virgin body, clearly shown in the woman's virginity and not so perfectly in the man's.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the discourse of the Church about woman exalted this integrity to the limit point of embodying in the contradictory figure of a Virgin Mother the supreme feminine ideal.<sup>3</sup>

This conception of virginity as sacred, integral and natural underlined the conception about beauty care in the religious manuals. Historically the Church fathers' preaching regarded feminine beauty with suspicion.<sup>4</sup> Consequently the use of cosmetics

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<sup>1</sup> WARNER, 1985:48.

<sup>2</sup> See chapter 2.

<sup>3</sup> For an analysis of Mary's virginity, see part one of Warner's book. (WARNER, 1985)

<sup>4</sup> For Saint Jerome the only good woman was the repulsive one. He praised Paula who "was squalid with dirt, almost blind with weeping" making him feel disgust at her sigh., therefore, able to keep his virtue.(Jerome, Letter xiv to Asella quoted by ARMSTRONG, 1986: 57)

was condemned,<sup>5</sup> either, because it increased woman's power of seduction – Eve's evil power – either, for tainting the immaculate natural state of the body.<sup>6</sup> Such representations emphasise dichotomies like the natural as opposed to the artificial; the sacred as opposed to the defiled.

Frieda Stadler<sup>7</sup> warned the readers against “the debasement of the face with the aid of make-up, the plucking of the eyebrows, the greasing of the hair, explaining that “a vulgar face attracts vulgar persons” (who should not figure amongst her readers). She reminds them that everything created by God is beauty – So a person does not have the right to make alterations to “the idea God made of her such as changing the colour of the hair or having long dark-red nails.” A discourse in total opposition to the more appealing one of the mass media. To reconcile both positions, health identified with hygiene and beauty would provide a shared ground for religion and publicity.<sup>8</sup>

Seduction was also reviewed: Frieda Stadler pointed out that the wish for beauty is “a natural desire of the soul.” It is not a mere physical desire since the souls created by God are wrapped in a body that is regulated by divine laws: the sacrament of matrimony, the subsistence of the human race and the population of His kingdom.<sup>9</sup> According to her argument beauty care is a prerogative just of the single girl, who still needs to find a suitor:

*She wants to please, she wants to claim attention –she wants to find a mate for her entire life. That is natural. [...] However, it is disturbing and wicked to see fourteen to sixteen year-old girls or married woman in dresses that claim the attention from men in the streets.<sup>10</sup>*

However religious authors had to change their emphasis. In the 1950s an increasing number of middle-class women were entering paid employment, even though it was to be a mere hiatus before marriage. It allowed a more friendly or informal relationship among men and women, beyond the limits and ways traditionally prescribed.

Religious authors feared the consequences of the close acquaintanceship of married men with women regarded as free, modern, up-to-date in fashion, taste, life style. For the [just] housewives it excited the imagination, fears and insecurities.

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<sup>5</sup> “The chief crime of Jezebel was her painted face and wicked connotations still cling to the idea of make-up.” WARNER, 1985: 372.

<sup>6</sup> For instance, by paralleling skin or hair ‘imperfections’ to tooth decay, which must be treated.

<sup>7</sup> It is important to note that although Frieda Stadler’s manual had been edited by a ‘modern’ publishing house in the Brazilian 1950s, Thiamer That makes reference to this book as having been edited in Hungary in the 1930s.

<sup>8</sup> See the previous chapter.

<sup>9</sup> Stadler, *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* It gives legitimisation to the *namorados*’ demands, as shown in chapter 2 of this thesis.



Strategies to deal with men finding a lover among colleagues was an ever present theme in agony columns. Thus, religious authors started to replicate the media discourse about the need of wives being as concerned with physical appearance as before marriage. Therefore both discourses – religious literature and publicity – although in apparent opposition, worked together for the 'domestication' of seduction.

### *The Making of Woman as the Seductive Object*

In 'peripheral' countries such as Brazil, patterns established by Hollywood through either the film heroines or film stars dictated models of femininity which would be adapted and adopted among middle classes.<sup>11</sup> Films supplied models, signs, images which reflected some social situations and transformed these models into the stereotypes which populated the 1950s imaginary.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> BESSE, 1983

<sup>12</sup> Reading Mary Ryan's account about 1920s movies, one can find several themes which permeated Brazilian novels, soap operas, advertisements in the 1950s. It is also important to note that several 1950's films were 1920's /1930s remakes, showing that 1920s issues could be actualised and were still present in the 1950s., dealt with in agony columns, or censured in religious manuals.

Early Hollywood films introduced the vamp, epitomised by Theda Bara, who projected female sexuality in the most aggressive way. Such figures of vamps were caricatures too extreme to endure; paradoxically they cleared the way for a more respectable brand of sex appeal<sup>13</sup> — a 'domesticated seduction' which inaugurated a sexiness more associated with attire, make-up and perfume than with the body itself.<sup>14</sup>

### *The 'Domestication' of Seduction*

The idea that a housewife should add to her many roles the one of lover – started to emerge at this time. Agony columns warned that a woman should “keep the flame of love burning” after marriage. One's husband should forever have “the girl he had once married.” He would not need to look outside for what he already has at home.” This idea of competitiveness — the wife should be as beautiful, as clever, as interesting as those women he met outside home – appeared in the media and religious manuals.<sup>15</sup> Seduction was added to the housewife's duties.

This represented a new conception of marriage which was being 'eroticized'. demanding from women a new conception or relationship with their bodies, and sexuality.<sup>16</sup> A wife's body should mean more than the possibility of progeny and conjugal virtues. It should be cared for, kept young, made beautiful. The message in the advertisements saw in it “the secret of perennial happiness” and the way to assure man's fidelity: “

In fact, the seduction the advertisements proclaimed had been 'domesticated' from the start. A single girl needed to get a suitor; an engaged lady, to get married; and a married woman needed to be beautiful to conserve her marriage. The publicity of two products made this argument quite transparent. First, a popular Brazilian lotion called '*Leite de Colônia*' (which was used as cleansing lotion, as foundation cream and as a deodorant); second, Lever (Lux) soap. They illustrated in comics the problems of not using the right product, and inversely the advantages of using it.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> RYAN: 502.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.: 507. See also chapter 4 of this thesis.

<sup>15</sup> NEGROMONTE, 1961: 185.

<sup>16</sup> As was analysed in a previous chapter, this 'eroticization' was experienced as a major problem by many middle class women in the 1960, since sexual performance had not been part of their 'good housewife's apprenticeship.' The magazine *Claudia*, created in 1961, which articulated the discourse of modernisation of family and housewifery, offered ready-made formulas and recipes to help its readers solve this problem. See MORAES, 1979 and also SARTI & MORAES, 1980.

<sup>17</sup> Both seemed to copy a popular formula used by Colgate toothpaste which showed – in comics – the romantic problems of those who had bad breathe.

These advertisements were articulated along two axes. In the first, they worked on the fears and cares that dwelt in women's imaginary. That is the fear of spinsterhood or of loosing the fugace 'everlasting' happiness in marriage foreseen in romantic novels and fairy tales. In the other, advertisements worked on romantic 'fetish' gestures, which were represented as unmistakable and indispensable proofs of love. The lack of such gestures would attest to indifference, a loose relationship, an evidence that marriage was in danger. It is argued that romantic films and novels amplified the importance of such gestures. They taught romanticism as they did modernity.

Contrary to more traditional religious authors, such as Álvaro Negromonte, who did not pay attention to this kind of problem, Fr. Desmarais insisted on the importance of such gestures in his books. He uses some anecdotes about how a perfect couple should behave. His counsels for husbands replicated the directory of correct romantic gestures of films and novels: inviting the wife to good restaurants, paying attention to her dresses and hair styles, kissing and hugging the wife ( "though deep in his heart he doesn't need or desired such caresses") and chiefly, never forgetting the important dates for their particular story. He warned:

*Do remember that these celebrations consolidate home happiness [...] Every time your budget allows do remember to give her flowers or chocolate."*<sup>18</sup>

However, he also warned that men are less sensitive than women, so the wife was not to mind if the husband eventually forgot something that seemed important to her. Differences between men's and women's viewpoint were common sense. and advertisements worked on that gap. They assured the female consumers an environment of a modern Hollywoodian fairy tale with husbands following these codified love gestures.

*Leite de Colônia* worked with an opposition between natural and artificial beauty – a circumlocution to stress a distinction between skin-care preparations and cosmetics. The first ones (as the product) treated minor skin troubles giving the heroine "a natural beauty." The second, just disguised them, "making her beauty artificial."<sup>19</sup> That was the central argument of the advertisements displayed in the next pages: any romantic problem ends when imperfections of the skin are treated and not simply covered with make-up.

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<sup>18</sup> DESMARAIS, 1952: 169 -170. The same was a theme for reflection in the Associations for Catholic Couples, where he exercised a great influence. Desmarais is clearly referring to the middle to upper class judging by the solutions he proposed to conjugal worries.. Family as a whole was represented as being jeopardised by modern life style. For these associations see chapter 1 of this thesis.

<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless make-up also claimed to give its users: "a young, healthy and natural look." ' Max Factor's pan-cake,' *Cinelandia*, 3 (32):15, March 1954.



“Descubra um noivo para mim...”



Oh! Laura... Não creio!... Racionalmente, você também não acredita que a cartomante possa descobrir um noivo para você... Antes, você deve descobrir sua beleza que está oculta sob um excessivo maquiagem.



Não... Você usou o maquiagem em demasia para disfarçar as imperfeições da pele. E, assim, sua beleza torna-se artificial. O segredo é corrigir as imperfeições com Leite de Colúmbia. E... aguarde o romance.



Foi um conselho de verdadeira amiga... Laura usou diariamente o Leite de Colúmbia e, em breve, recebeu declarações como esta: “Querida! Ontem, nos conhecemos... Hoje, estou ansiosa para revê-la... Roberto”

As this heroine still does not know the product - neither that she has an artificial beauty - she asks a fortune-teller: *Please do find a husband to me!*<sup>20</sup> —

<sup>20</sup> Another woman envied oriental women for hiding their skin imperfections behind a veil. *Eu invejava as mulheres do Oriente. Seleções 17(99), April 1950.*





**Agora... quantos pretendentes!...**



Antes, era sempre esquecida nos  
bailes, nos festas e reuniões... Sua  
aparência não despertava atrações...  
Passagens e desejos para seu par  
e ela invejava a beleza de suas  
amigas... até que um dia...

... sua verdadeira amiga lhe di-  
ziu: "Você precisa cuidar de sua  
pele, menina. Não se iluda  
com o maquiagem exagerada  
para destacar os ombros, lábios.  
Corrija com Leite de Colônia."

Foi um conselho sincero... Agora,  
faz falta à gente se só chegada a  
"esquecer" tentos admiradores...  
E sua amiga teve por aquela subli-  
tosa beleza natural que o Leite de  
Colônia proporcionou à sua pele.

**Não aculte e nem disforce! CORRIJA as  
imperfeições da pele com LEITE DE COLONIA**

On the contrary, this beautiful woman (already a customer) can boast "Now ... what a lot of suitors I have!..."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The advertisement tells the conclusion of her story after starting to use *Leite de Colônia*. Before, she was left alone in the parties, after the advises of her true friend, she triumphs over her success. "Agora... quantos pretendentes!..." *Cinelândia* 1 (8):56 December 1952. The difference between the women in these two advertisements (before and after using *Leite de Colônia*, and being successful with men) is striking.



Young wives could have the same sort of afflictions.



**“Será isto o fim do meu romance?”...**

**Já sei qual é razão de sua tristeza, minha filha. É a indiferença de seu marido. Estava pensando isso há dias, eu também, ele me disse que, depois de casado, você esqueceu-se de sua beleza. E isso acontece...**

**Antes de casar-se, você usava Leite de Colônia. Depois, esqueceu-se... Virem-se as circunstâncias e você só pensa em casamento para distração. Se você esquecer sua beleza, seu marido esquecerá você. Trate sua pele.**

**Foi um conselho sábio de mãe para filha. Lavei muito os ossos do Leite de Colônia... E hoje ela recebe com satisfação: ... Ah, querida! Vamos ao jantar amanhã comemorar nosso 5º ano de casados? Sim? Ah já!**

**A sad young wife worried over her distracted husband reading a newspaper (a popular representation of bored husbands in cartoons and films) “Is this the end of my romance?” Her mother advises her: “If you forget to care for your beauty, your husband will forget you.” That is the only reason for a woman to take such care: to “get that outstanding natural beauty...that men just adore.”<sup>23</sup>**

<sup>23</sup> ‘Será Este o Fim do Meu Romance?’ *Cinelândia*, 2 (10):49, February 1953. An article called ‘Lua de Mel Hoje e ... Sempre’ (Honeymoon forever after) gives a list of a wife’s ‘dos’ and ‘don’t’. The first DO is: a wife must always be impeccable regarding personal care and clothes. However she must never use creams and ‘bobbin’s to curl the hair, before her husband: Her cares must be invisible to keep his illusion that she is the perennial young bride once he married. *Cinelândia*, 2 (16):8, July 1953.

Paradoxically, there is no contradiction between the discourse of publicity, and the one of 'modern' religious authors. Fr.Desmarais stated forthrightly that "nature made woman dependent on man; moreover, made woman young, beautiful and seductive to attract man."<sup>24</sup> There was no doubt that what he called nature resulted of the knowledge of the right beauty product, and of being seductive towards and dependent of men.

## *A Woman's Dual Role*

There was also perfect agreement between the discourse of the advertisements and the arguments of the philosophers who built the myth of the Eternal Woman, and assumed that '*altercentrism*' is an inherent part of 'feminine nature.'<sup>25</sup> That is the capacity of finding in another person the centre of one's life, and only in that way reaching an equilibrium.<sup>26</sup> Although culturally built, this 'feminine nature' is internalised, deeply embodied by the individual as a result of the whole process of socialisation, turning out to be 'naturalised' in the end.

The first persona to be fulfilled by a woman is that of "the desirable object. This role will school her in the art of cosmetic allurements, seductive mannerism and the sublimation of straightforward assertion."<sup>27</sup> The 'seductive object' is the general target of beauty aid advertisements. The second persona is that of the desire to live for another. "This role will school her in self-forgetfulness, service and sacrifice, in nurturing rather than initiating behaviours."<sup>28</sup> This "alter-centred subject" corresponds to the way advertisements pictured woman as housewife/mother. Woman is taught to live a life as a modern Sleeping Beauty, waiting forever for the expected 'other' who will make her life meaningful and fulfilled.<sup>29</sup> In this 'other' and only in this she will find happiness: their happiness will be hers, and they will be endowed with the power to make her happy.

The 'domestication' of seduction is the way to link these two women's personae. The making of the seductive object is the building of the altercentered subject: man is the ultimate reason for a woman's life, and her efforts to preserve beauty and youth after marriage are in the same path of other duties directed to keep family in perennial bliss. Thus the seductive object is a facet of the altercentered one building a paradoxical bridge

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<sup>24</sup> See chapter 3

<sup>25</sup> The discussion about the cultural construction of 'feminine nature' has already been made by many feminist researchers. See the Introduction of this thesis.

<sup>26</sup> See chapter 3

<sup>27</sup> KOLBENSCHLAG, 1979: 12.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. : 12.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. : 12.

between the discourse of publicity and of the religious manuals. The advertisements of Lux soap in 1954/1955 illustrate this quite well, picturing common situations from daily life:<sup>30</sup>

This cheerful girl describes the “happy resolution to a love story” (a sudden proposal) – that is, a reluctant fiancé making up his mind after her using the “soap of the stars.”<sup>31</sup>

Girls from small towns and villages used to care for their '*namorados*', studying or working in larger cities. Commonly they married there, leaving former '*namoradas*' waiting for their return. Therefore the headline of one advertisement is meaningful for a young public: “Hollywood stars weren't lying: my charming prince is back...” the look of my skin ... the perfume around me ... everything pleased him so much ... and the same night he proposed me.”<sup>32</sup>

<sup>30</sup> It is interesting to note that the *Leite de Colônia* campaign was carried on in 1953-1955. It makes 1953-1955 high-tide of the 'domestication' of seduction.

<sup>31</sup> 'Ava Gardner was responsible [for] a happy-end for my love romance'. *Revista do Rádio*, (248):29, 12/6/ 1954. Another shows a secretary who had been daydreaming about a colleague ('My dreams became reality when he decided to marry me. Pier Angeli did the sorcery: My colleague was transformed into a husband.' *Um Colega Transformado em Marido*. *Revista do Rádio*, (309) 34, 13/8/ 1955. The love scenes in the advertisements look like scenes from Hollywood films.:

<sup>32</sup> The exodus of young men from small towns was responsible for the large number of spinsters there. Conversely, towns with a large number of young male outsiders used to have a similar problem: students who went back to their hometowns to marry the-girl-next-door, frustrating their new '*namoradas*'. This was a theme in the agony columns. See 'Da Mulher para a Mulher'. *O Cruzeiro*: 92. Jul. 18, 1953.

Provided these girls assumed that beauty care is an enduring wife's duty, they would be able to repeat another advertisement: "after ten years of marriage we're still on honeymoon."<sup>34</sup>

A wife tells her story: "My life is full of happiness! We have been married for 15 years, but for Alfredo I am still his eternal namorada. I am returning from a happy trip with him.... and the destination could not have been better chosen – the same place where we spent our honeymoon." She reveals: "Nothing could make me happier than that air trip – the first of my life." The headline guarantees: The same can happen to you.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>33</sup> At the end the heroine saw Joan Crawford's portrait – "That admirable film star to whom I am in debt of my happiness. It was she who advised me to use Lever Soap....." *O Cruzeiro* *ibid*.

<sup>34</sup> "As always, Gilberto did not forget our wedding anniversary. Besides a gift and flowers he also took me out. In the cinema, very close to him I was the happiest woman in the world. Barbara Stanwick was the film star.

The analysis of these advertisements reveals at first glance, that woman depends on man to achieve happiness, whether completed in a proposal, or marriage. Happiness could only be kept with these stereotyped gestures, established by Hollywood and romantic novels as mandatory demonstrations of enduring love and caring. The husband was also in charge of schooling woman in the things of the world. He was her mediator between the public and the domestic space; she owed him new experiences such as flying.

Advertisements play with common-sense: man must be compelled to endow woman with happiness, which depends on feminine skills shared by women, generating a kind of complicity among them: man is naive and easily cheated and woman must help one another to do so.<sup>35</sup> Woman must learn from each other the evasive concealed manner of solving problems, and the manipulations and strategies to deal with the domestic domain.<sup>36</sup> In this way, woman wields power over the household, whilst pretending to be a submissive executor of her husband's determinations and desires. That is why, contrary to the popular wisdom that a woman's worst enemy is another woman, in all of these advertisements women relied on the advice of another woman to solve their problem (a true friend, the mother, a film-star). The situation is presented as if pleasing men was just another small tip for solving domestic problems.

Domesticated seduction would imply hiding from men the minuteness of her daily life. From this woman experienced a double and contradictory way of living in the domestic domain which was different from that of man: As prescribed in agony columns, in her husband's absence she would effect the domestic chores and carry out her beauty care. Then, it was indeed her time of informality: she could wear old and comfortable clothes, curl her hair with proper devices and generously cream her face. That time would end just before the husband was supposed to come back home — a very fetishized moment by the media and religious authors.

The transition from the public to domestic domain should run smoothly, without marked contrast for him. A cheerful, properly dressed woman would prevent him of missing the beautiful companionship he had met at the office, and of making unfavourable comparison with his wife. She should hide domestic problems and troubles, being instead a sweet and sympathetic listener to his triumphs and failures. Home should be tidy with the delicious delicious smell of a meal and neatly dressed and merry children would complete the picture of perfect happiness. The Victorian ideal of home as heaven (for men) still prevailed.

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<sup>35</sup> Beauty care, attended to far from masculine eyes, which should only notice the end product (her sudden attractiveness), is a good example.

<sup>36</sup> Mothers, friends and film stars teach other women the trick to keep men always in love, as these advertisements exemplifies quite well. See also chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis.

Thus is possible to venture that DaMatta's description of home is possibly biased by male gaze. In his dichotomous explanation of Brazil, home is assumed as the place for informal stay, where social masks are put down and everyone could rest and be as they like. In 1950s terms, this is the description of the ideal place woman had to shape for her husband's rest. Women were exhorted to invest great effort to make this credible. Thus, home would be a site of informality for him, at the expenses of becoming a formal place for her.

In spite of the revival of the cult of domesticity, and glorification of the housewife role in the 1950s, the domestic domain was perceived as narrow and limited in comparison to public space. This was the very place of newness, freedom and modernity. That perception was even inflated where it was the public space of the largest cities. It is little wonder that those women who circulated in those spaces, mastering their codes, were perceived as a huge menace by 'just-housewives.'

### *Beauty And Romance*

In the later 1950s, seduction had already been 'domesticated'. The discourse of the advertisements left out explicit references to husbands, marriage and family. Instead of the negative message of fears and doubts, they preferred to show positive images of romance, available for consumers of the right products.

In 1955, romance awaited those who used *Cilion*. But the figures in the advertisement did not connote the fantastic, sophisticated romance of film stars, but rather the plain, accessible '*namoro*' with a closer, "tall, tanned and handsome" man. One of those easily found on Copacabana's beaches. *Cilion* was a plain pomade used to make the eyelids glossy and to "darken, elongate and curve the eyelashes," it was also used to avoid or cure eyesores.

*Romance em Hollywood?*  
*Não!*  
*Romance no Rio!*

Ele disse, surpresa, surpresa:  
Eu, tocou... Deixe que você me julgue  
Ele disse para mim, mulher. Eu disse para ele.  
Sorri. Resultado: dois meses de namoro e logo  
nos casamos. Como tudo isso aconteceu? Ele mesmo  
explica: "Sou o 'lar obrigatório' a sua-ia.  
Por isso que tudo aconteceu."

...com o uso de um novo sistema de aplicação, criando  
o efeito, através do recurso ao efeito cilios, criando de brilho de  
subsequente e impede a formação de caspa e herpes.  
Preserva a toda manhã. Desde então.

Foto de Agence  
de Arte Giffoni  
e de Roberto  
de Arte Giffoni  
de Arte Giffoni

**cilion**  
protoge, esbelteza de cílios

"Romance in Hollywood? Not at all. Romance in Rio!" the advertisement for *Cilion*, told a bride's love-at-first-sight story, which ended with the revelation: "He explained to me: 'your eyes made me love you. That was how everything happened.'"<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> O *Cruzeiro*, 5/5-153.



However, soon Max Factor was promising “Champagne sparkling eyes”<sup>40</sup> for those who used their special eye-make-up: shadow, mask and pencil. These products, in colours matching the lipstick and nail polishing, represented a further step away from the pomade with medicinal properties. It promised “a special dramatic accent”, or “an exotic iridescent accent ” to woman's sight.<sup>41</sup> Facing this sophistication of both – product and advertisement fantasy – in a few years, Cilion was totally out-of-date.

In marked contrast to the moralist literature which envisioned everything as a dangerous occasion of sin, physical proximity between the sexes became a focal point in the advertisements. It was depicted not only as enjoyable and pleasant, but rather as a daily experience quite common to their



The headline of this advertisement of mouthwash left nothing open to doubt: “How do you like it? That way ... or this way ? (Of course very close is much better...)”<sup>39</sup>

readers.

Advertisements suggested that romance could start at any time anywhere, thus women should be always ready to it. Romance was also suggested by its mellow accent' or by the choice, of proper words:

*there is much tenderness  
in a gesture, in a simple  
glance*

*and in the delicious  
fragrance of Damosel - a  
perfume which speaks  
directly to your heart.*



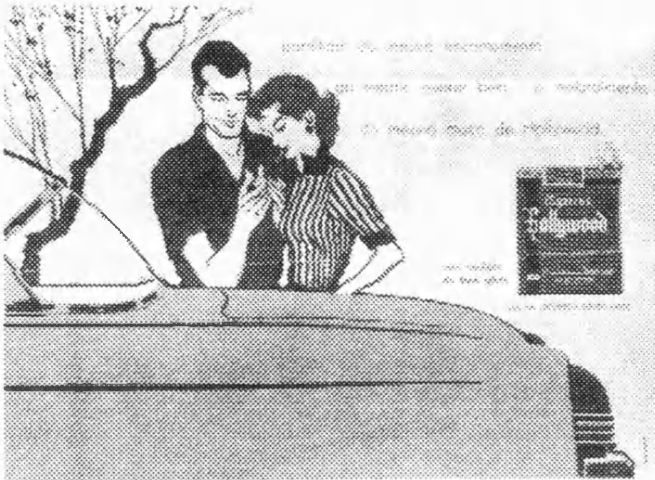
Another advertisement of a cleansing cream proclaimed: “Ponds' deep cleansing makes an enormous difference ... when you are within reach of a kiss.”<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Astringosol *Cinelândia*, 6 (117): 7, September 1957.

<sup>40</sup> *Cinelândia*, 7 (128):3, May 1958.

<sup>41</sup> Max Factor (Toque Oriental), *Cinelândia*, 7 (43), October. 1958. (Sorrento.) *Cinelândia*, 6 (107), April. 1957. It is important to note that, according to the advertisements, the effect of cosmetics is not restricted to the eyes but extended to the sight, “which is dramatically changed ”

<sup>42</sup> Advertisement on the left. *Cinelândia*, 7(128):19. March. 1958.



"They share the same spell; the same affection and, naturally the same packet of Hollywood."<sup>42</sup>



Women did not simply use make up; but they were "under its caressing touch."<sup>43</sup>



Women should use the right tooth-paste, since otherwise they would complain: "Only the sun kisses me!"<sup>44</sup> On the contrary women could be sure that "there will always be somebody waiting for you" (if you choose Atkinson's Arabesque).<sup>45</sup>

<sup>42</sup> 'partilham do mesmo encantamento.... (Hollywood cigarettes) *Revista da Semana*, 58 (47), 19 November. 29, 1958.

<sup>43</sup> The advertisement on the right. 'Sob o toque acariciante de Flatter Face' (Richard Hudnut) *O Cruzeiro*, 32(26):96, 9/4/ 1960.

<sup>44</sup> Her claims are due to bad-breath. So, a friend suggests her a going to the dentistry who gives the advice to use Colgate. And then she ends the comics with a *namorado*. *Cinelândia* 4 (55):14; February, 1955.

<sup>45</sup> *Há sempre alguém que espera por você* *O Cruzeiro*. 31 (22) 19, 14/3/ 1959



A lipstick promised “the power of a demon” to its users, because it was: *ardent ... more provocative ... more like we are – not a cold lipstick invented for foreign women, rather it is warmer to accentuate seduction and the informal charm of Brazilian women.*<sup>46</sup>

endlessly waiting for an answer or a solution. The advertisements promise that the use of that lipstick would empower woman to seduce as many men as she liked, manipulating their feelings and enslaving them to her caprices.

Lipsticks were made for “ardent,” “loving,” “thrilling personalities.”<sup>48</sup> Its colours would give women: “new audacious,” “shocking and insinuating,” “warmer and tender,” “smiling lips with an inviting promise for the unexpected.” Moreover they would give them “luxury and beauty,” “the charm of Paris,” “the

Eve was the target of make-up advertisements. It is interesting to compare the illustrations of these two advertisements. The first shows the picture of a beautiful red-haired woman (who has the power of the demon); the second, which complements the first, shows a woman in a red fancy-dress, with horns and a trident. In the background there is a large cooking pan in an open hearth with two well dressed men being cooked inside. ‘Cozinhar alguém’ (‘To Be Cooking someone’) or ‘Cozinhar alguém em fogo brando’ (‘To simmer someone’) are popular ways of referring to leaving someone



The referent system is the Genesis ( Paradise and Hell ).<sup>47</sup> However, in this case Eve is not just the Demon’s instrument to tempt men. By using that lipstick – that is definitely a temptation [as stated in the headline] – Eve became the Devil itself, empowered to slave men.<sup>1</sup> It also connotes popular images of hell – the devil’s cooking pot where the sinners will be burnt till the end of times. The red-haired woman also has a devilish connotation.

<sup>46</sup> Its ‘chauvinistic’ appeal also represented the struggle of the smaller national industries against the all powerful foreign corporations. *Querida*, 4(74):73, June, 1957.

<sup>47</sup> Referent system is used here as in WILLIAMSON,1978. ‘Simplesmente uma Tentação’ *Cinelândia* 6 (117):18. September 1957.

<sup>48</sup> Max Factor(Romã), *Cinelândia*, 7 (131), April 1958. Baton Tangee (Vesúvio), *Cinelândia*, 7 (136):39, July 1956. Baton Cutex (Coral Ice), *Cinelândia*, 7 (124): 47, January 1958.

“the Latin flame,”<sup>48</sup> “the Oriental mystery” “the warmer dazzling air of summer time,” “the luxuriance, brightness, and freshness of daylight.”<sup>49</sup> Colours were “impetuous,” “exotic,” “audacious,” “magnetic” “romantic,” “seductive and amorous” “joyful as Venice” “bright as the sun in Lido, “or “like the electric flame of coral”.<sup>50</sup>

However, lipstick could not simply suggest seduction, it should care for the practical aspects of the issue. Therefore, the invention of indelible lipsticks was considered a modern advance. Helene Rubinstein claimed that its *Stay-Long* lipstick allowed the user to eat, smoke, drink and “*even kiss*” without leaving marks.<sup>51</sup> For the same reasons, Cutex intent to be “the lipstick which He prefers” Max Factor was more ambiguous: “After hours ... after dinner ... after coffee ... even after the last kiss ... it still will be sparkling.”<sup>52</sup> Sooner or later almost all brands would allege the same qualities.<sup>53</sup>

### *Allusions and Metaphors of Romance*

It is important to analyse these advertisements in order to disclose which appeals were made and which metaphors were used to connote passion and seduction. Romance was associated with roses, sunrise, night time and music.<sup>54</sup> It also meant passion associated with fire, electricity, magnetism, hot temperature, explosion. Lipstick *Pink TNT* warned : “Take Care! Explosive! It is full of beauty! A wonderful dynamite for your nails and lips. It is the most infallible weapon to conquer your lover’s heart.”<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> in this case is interesting to note that the reference is Italy, as if Brazilian were not Latin as well.

<sup>49</sup> Baton Tangee (Bambolê), *Cinelândia*, 8 (156):7, May 1959. Baton Tangee (Vesuvio), *Cinelândia*, 7 (136):39, July 1956. Baton Elizabeth Arden (Rose Aurora), *Cinelândia*, 7 (143), October 1958; Baton Max Factor (Toque Oriental), *Cinelândia*, 7 (143), October 1958. Baton Margaret Duncan, *Cinelândia*, 5 (87):7, June 1956. Baton Elizabeth Arden (Canary Red), *Cinelândia*, 7 (139), August 1958. Baton Tangee (Napoli), *Cinelândia*, 7 (143):45, October 1958; Baton Palermont (Tamara), *Cinelândia*, 6 (100):11, January 1957. Elizabeth Arden (Lido Venice Pink), *Cinelândia*, 7 (145), November 1958. Baton Tangee (Alvorada), *Cinelândia*, 6 (105): 71, March 1957.

<sup>50</sup> ‘Vesuvio’ Baton Tangee *Cinelândia*, 7 (136):39, July 1956. ‘Tamara’ Baton Palermont, *Cinelândia*, 6 (100):11, January 1957. Toque Oriental’ Max Factor *Cinelândia*, 7 (143), October 1958; Romã ‘Max Factor *Cinelândia*, 7 (131), April 1958. ‘Cognac’ Palermont *Cinelândia*, 6 (102):67 February. 1957. ‘Noturno’ Palermont, *Cinelândia*, 7 (138):9, August 1958; ‘Morango,’ Baton Cutex and ‘Ballet’ Baton Tangee *Cinelândia*, 6 (106), April 1957. ‘Rose Aurora’, Elizabeth Arden, *Cinelândia*, 7 (143), October 1958; ‘Lido Venice Pink,’ Elizabeth Arden, *Cinelândia*, 7 (1145), November 1958. Baton Cutex, ‘Coral Ice’, *Cinelândia*, 7 (124):47, January 1958.

<sup>51</sup> The headline was ‘A fabulous new lipstick.’ *O novo Stay -Long* (no translation of the name). *Cinelândia*, 3 (32):11, March 1954.

<sup>52</sup> Cutex, *Cinelândia*, 7 (128):39, March 1958; Max Factor, *Cinelândia*, 4 (55): 27, February. 1955.

<sup>53</sup> Baton Tangee, *Cinelândia*, 4 (50):12, December 1954.

<sup>54</sup> Romance was also present in names associated with: a) roses: *Rose Aurora*; *Rosalegre*, *Rosafesta*, *Rosalinda*, *Cotyrose*); *Rose du Matin*, *Sage Rose*, *Roseiral*, *Gayrose* b) daybreak: *Rose Aurora* = rosy dawn; *Alvorada* = daybreak; c) night: *Noturno*; d) Music: *Rapsodia*. This lipstick was advertised in the opposite page of *Cinelândia*, where a large picture of Elizabeth Taylor being kissed by Victorio Gassman advertises a film of the same name.

<sup>55</sup> *Cinelândia*, 6 (110) June 1977.

They sold modernity, fantasy, exoticism, romance and passion, through the names of colours, new brands of products or its packaging.<sup>65</sup> Fantasy reached its zenith in promises such as: "Paris will be on your mirror" or "Latin Passion in your lips...".<sup>66</sup> Exoticism and Sophistication were connoted through the names of colours in foreign languages such as *Canary Red*, *Pink from Paris*<sup>67</sup>

Romance was linked to Italy in colours named *Sorrento*, *Napoli* or *Venice's Carnival*.<sup>68</sup> where love waited woman everywhere, as in the films *Roman Holiday*, 'Three Coins in the Fountain' and *Summertime*.<sup>69</sup> Romantic Italy was present in American musics whose lyrics mixed English and Italian words; *That's Amore* (1953), *Innamoratta* (1956), *Arriverdecì Roma* (1957)<sup>70</sup>

Another resource used was the mention of the Orient, such as in *Toque Oriental* (Oriental Touch) and *Tâmara*. People had an ambivalent attitude regarding the Orient: the place of the stereotyped cruel, cold-blooded and treacherous men, but, also of exquisite, mysterious beauties, whose stereotyped signs could be beautifully embroidered in



In 1958 'O *Jornal Feminino*' published the suggestion of a reader for serving little sandwiches arranged in the image of Geisha – covered with spread cheese dyed with a bit pink, eyes formed by egg white and dried plums etc

<sup>65</sup> Modernity was even stressed by names linked to up-to-date facts or devices such as *Bambolé* (Hula Hoop); *New Fashion*; *Conversível* 59. *Cinelândia*, August 1958; *ibid.*, October 1958; *ibid.*, September 1958.

<sup>66</sup> *Quenda*, 3 (51): 49 July 1956.

<sup>67</sup> 'Canary Red' Elizabeth Arden, *Cinelândia*, 7 (139), August 1958; Cutex's *Pink from Paris*. *O Cruzeiro* 32 (25):65 April 2, 1960. And also colours named *Rose d'Auvignon*, *Coral Ice*, *Lido-Venice Pink*.

<sup>68</sup> *Cinelândia*, 117: 38 September 1957

<sup>69</sup> 1953. Paramount. Dir. William Wyler. with Audrey Hepburn and Gregory Peck 'A princess on an official visit to Rome slips away incognito and falls in love with a newspaperman' (WALKER, 1992. p 640.) 1954. 20th Century Fox Dir. . Sol C. Siegel with Clifton Webb, Dorothy Mc Guire, Louis Jourdan, Rossano Brazzi, Jean Peters. Three American girls find romance in Rome'. (WALKER, 1992. p 772.) 1955. in Great Britain called *Summer Madness*. Dir. David Lean with Katherin Hepburn and Rossano Brazzi. 'An American spinster has a holiday in Venice and becomes romantically involved' (WALKER, 1992. p 732.)

<sup>70</sup> All of them musical hits of the singer Dean Martin, which became successes either in the original or in Brazilian versions.

table clothes,<sup>71</sup> used to decorate cakes and dishes for parties,<sup>72</sup> or inspire home decoration. The Orient was also the local of painful romances: Japan and China had been the site of woman's servitude, delicate costumes, strange familiar relationship learned through Pearl Buck's and Lin Yutang's novels which were very popular in Brazil. In addition there were Hollywood films such as *Love is a Many Splendoured Thing*, *Tea House of the August Moon* and *Sayonara*<sup>73</sup> all huge successes. For a feminine, weeping public the Orient was not only the place of exoticism, but also of sad romances.

Seduction was promised by the most varied articles, reinforcing the image of woman as a desirable object, associating this image with femininity. Early in 1950, Soutien (bra) Mourisco stressed its comfort, durability and elegance. However by 1957 it promised to make woman "more audacious than ever"<sup>74</sup> A brand of cotton night-gown promised hallucinating nights,<sup>75</sup> no matter how unsophisticated they seemed or how ironic the name sounded - Luxury. This adjective were considered more appropriated for handmade embroidered satin or silk lingerie whose patterns were regularly published in the *Jornal das Moças*. Such night-gowns were favoured by brides-to-be as a sign of refinement and elegance. Towards the end of the decade ready-made lingerie in rayon and nylon became more and more common. Their lines used to have French names - such as *Feminité*, *Intimité* - to create the same aura of elegance.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Patterns for embroidering table clothes, cushions, bed covers, in oriental style were very popular ( see illustration on the last page of the chapter). At the end of the decade there was a huge demand among the readers of the *Jornal Feminino* for a mysterious pattern for tea-towels called '*Lua de Mel no Japão*' (A Honeymoon in Japan). Mysterious because no one could provide that pattern or inform where it had been published. Finally they considered that possibly it never existed.

<sup>72</sup> They also published another one in the shape of a Mandarin. The popularity of these dishes is also mentioned by Elizabeth Teixeira. She pointed out that to decorate dishes in that way was one of the accomplishments taught in the 'Courses for Brides' in Curitiba, 1958. TEIXEIRA, 1993.

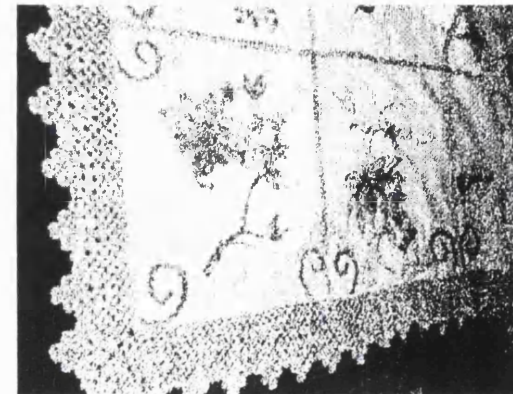
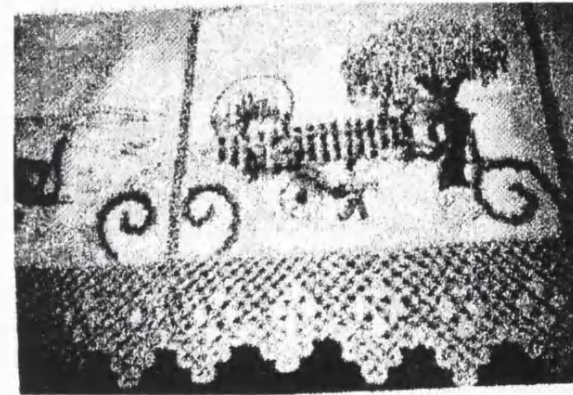
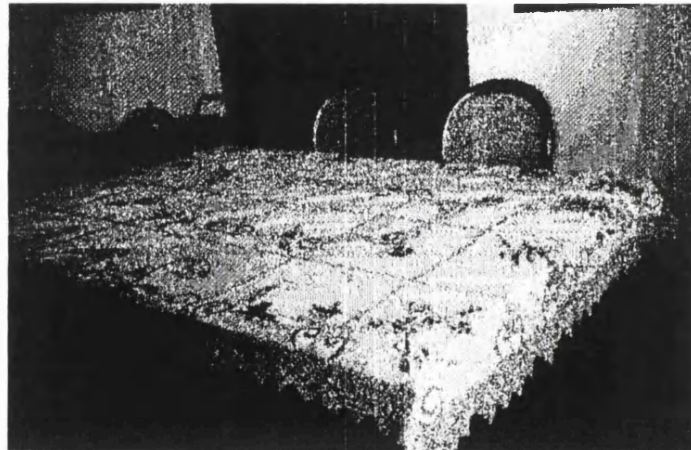
<sup>73</sup> 1955. Dir. Buddy Adler, with Jennifer Jones and William Holden. 'During the Korean war, a Eurasian lady doctor in Hong Kong falls in love with a war correspondent. Self admittedly sentimental soap with a tragic ending.' (WALKER, 1992. p 452.) 1956. MGM Dir. Jack Cummings with Marlon Brando Myyoshi Ueki and Glenn Ford. 'Okinawa 1944: a wily interpreter helps American troops to succumb to the oriental way of life.' (WALKER, 1992. p 748.) 1957. Goetz Pictures Dir. William Goetz, with Marlon Brando. 'An American air force major in Tokyo after the war falls in love with a Japanese actress. A lush travelogue interrupted by two romances, one tragic and one happy.' (WALKER, 1992. p 658.)

<sup>74</sup> O *Jornal das Moças* 1840 p. 6, September 21 1950. *Querida*, p 57 1957.

<sup>75</sup> Luxury nightgowns. *Alterosa* 13 (137):129 September 1951.

<sup>76</sup> *Querida*, 4 (74):59, June 1957.

*Table clothe embroidered with Japanese motifs*<sup>80</sup>



<sup>80</sup>The Spanish monthly magazine *'La Familia'* included squares of fabric - with a pattern already transferred to it, and the necessary thread - to be embroidered and afterwards assembled, forming table clothes, bedcovers, and so on. In this table cloth the patches displayed all the stereotypes linked to Orient: *'nikshaws,' geishas, willow and cherry trees, bridges and boats in Japanese style.* As this magazine was more expensive than the average, a middle-class reader could hardly buy them every month, and seldom could complete an entire piece. This specific table cloth was worked in satin stitch, the patches linked with *'point d'ajour'* and the cloth finished with a large *crochet* edging. It was part of a trousseau made in Curitiba, in the southern part of Brazil, in the 1950s.

## Chapter 9

### *Modern Housewifery*

#### *Housewives and Servants: Mothers and Children*

Advertisements for toiletries emphasised woman as the desirable object, and at first glance, advertisements for domestic goods (in a broader sense), stressed her opposite role, 'the altercentred subject, that is the one who had been schooled in "self-forgetfulness, service and sacrifice."<sup>1</sup> We have seen that far from being opposite roles, both the seductive object and the altercentred subject are two different sides of the same coin. This chapter explores the way in which the advertisements for domestic appliances and canned food pictured a new 'modern' version of that 'second persona.' It also explores the images of woman displayed in advertisements of domestic goods which focused on the 'modern housewife.' The servant issue, still responsible for all domestic chores in middle-class homes, remained an important problem during the period. New exigencies were placed upon motherhood with the popularisation of theories about germs and vitamins, and the inchoate 'psychologisation of the family' after the vulgarisation of some Freudian ideas and consequent discussions about child education.

#### *The Altercentred Subject*

There is a long-standing idea that sacrifice is deeply embodied in woman's personality due to 'her sublime mission of motherhood.' Woman had been naturally so prepared to endure pain, that she almost became eager for it.

At the end of the 1940s, a Brazilian writer regretted news about research made in America and the USSR to suppress pain in childbirth. "Doctors in chemistry are in competition to challenge the biblical precept offering a complete amnesty for Eve's tribute," claimed the scandalised author.<sup>2</sup> He cajoles women against such newness :

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<sup>1</sup> Kolbenschlag, 1979.

<sup>2</sup> Implicit was also the idea of the 'materialism' of such proposal, both in Soviet Union, as a communist nation, and America as an excessively secularised society. The illustration shows, in a wood [Russian?] cabin a sick girl in bed with a mother giving her a spoonful of medicine. Austregésilo de Athayde, 'O Tributo da Maternidade.', *O Cruzeiro* : 5, 1/3/1947.



*Don't you think that it will steal from motherhood its source of purification and beauty?...Woman has always endured this suffering with tenacity and heroism, prizing it as a first reward to be paid for the love of her children. Moral bonds between these two beings are as stronger and greater as the mother's sacrifice in delivery<sup>3</sup>.*

Self-forgetfulness, service and sacrifice were the raw material for picturing woman in advertisements for domestic products. They are represented either as selfless serving beings, or as passive observers of other's joys and pleasures. The recognition by her family as a well done job was the ultimate source of her pride and happiness. As a housewife in the illustration of an advertisement pointed out: "I'm joyful in seeing the joy of my husband."<sup>5</sup>

### *The Perfect Housewife*

Deeply embedded in conventional thinking was the idea that a married woman had in the performance of domestic skills her ultimate 'raison d'être'. Moreover, knowing how to perform them was represented as part of 'feminine nature', as if this were genetically acquired. Her best gift for sure should be a domestic appliance. Her duties as housewife would start in the very beginning of her married life, perfectly administering the house, even if she had never learned how to do it.

**"Obrigada, querido  
A SINGER sempre foi o  
meu sonho!"**

Não mais de cem anos que, pelo mundo inteiro, a Singer tem sido escolhida pelas mulheres, como a «boa surpresa». E há mais de cem anos que as donas de casa recebem com alegria o presente!

A Singer é a máquina de costura perfeita de leve manejo, de trabalho silencioso. E dura vários séculos! De factas experiências disponíveis. Prefira máquina garantida por mais de 50 anos de experiência. Se não há ainda não existe uma Singer, excepto a sua harmonia. Constatada ainda hoje mais próxima. Veja Singer para saber das vantagens únicas que a SINGER oferece.

A vista de um aparelho moderno.

lojas ou representantes autorizados Singer em todo o país.

**SINGER SEWING MACHINE COMPANY**

o nome garante o produto! Marca Registrada

**:"Thanks, darling. A sewing machine has always been in my dreams."<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>3</sup> Austregésilo de Athayde *ibid*.

<sup>4</sup> Singer Sewing Machine, *Seleções*, 30 (174), July 1956. Illustration above. These advertisements also made clear the social division of roles: father/husband buy and give the appliances for the wife to use and make family happy.

<sup>5</sup> Emulsão de Scott, *O Cruzeiro*: 12, 1/10/ 1955.

Some advertisements used the figure of a bride or a scene of a wedding to stress this point.<sup>8</sup> No later than the wedding day should she be reminded about her responsibilities: Under the classical figure of the bride being carried by the bridegroom, the advertisement for pans asked: "What will happen after the honeymoon?" To the couple going out the church under a shower of rice grains, *Detefon* wished "Be happy...with *Detefon*."<sup>9</sup> In the illustration on the right, bride and bridegroom look forward, as in popular wedding portraits. The message is incisive: *'His future is in your hands'*:



Brides evoke everlastingness – this cutlery should be as enduring as marriage in a country where divorce was not allowed by law.<sup>7</sup>

A large advertisement for "CORDURA DE CÔCO CARIOCA". At the top, it says "o futuro dele..." (his future...). Below this is a black and white photograph of a bride and groom looking forward. To the right of the photo is a can of coconut oil and a plate of food. Below the photo and can, there is a large logo that says "CORDURA DE CÔCO CARIOCA" and "COMPANHIA CARIOCA INDUSTRIAL". There is also some smaller text in Portuguese, including "está em suas mãos" (it's in your hands) and "Carioca" in a stylized font.

*That's you ! Married at last! Now that you have fulfilled your golden dream, remember that the future of your husband depends on you. Besides being cheerful and patient, you must accomplish your domestic duties. Among them the most important is your husband's nourishment [...] Using coconut oil you can prepare more nutritive, light and tasty meals. Your husband must be delighted with your cooking skills from the very beginning.*<sup>6</sup>

The implicit duties in her role as housewife — the management of home and her responsibility for the well-being of the family — recall the already very much

<sup>6</sup> 'Carioca coconut oil,' *Revista do Radio*, 98 : 7 , 24/7/ 1951. Illustration on the right

<sup>7</sup> *Seleções* 24 (140). 112, September 1953.

<sup>8</sup> However the figure of the bride could also be used as the symbol of the happy ending of a love story, achieved by the use of the right product, such as in the advertisement of Cilion (*O Cruzeiro*,: 5, /3/1953.), Kolynos. (A smile...white teeth. Then the proposal and the bouquet...*Cinelandia* 2 (24) :18 , November. 1958).

<sup>9</sup> (*Coming back home, the first contact with the kitchen where Rochedo pans – the most desirable wedding gift– are waiting her*). *O Cruzeiro* : 58, 13/5/ 1950. *Detefon*: *Revista do Radio* 126 : 47, 5/2/1952; 'Carioca coconut oil,' *Revista do Radio*, 98 : 7 , 24/7/ 1951. Illustration on the right

discussed question of housework.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, it also stress the question of woman's power: "housework as the ritual creation of order confers a form of domestic power on women which is so 'natural' and habitual that we have largely cease to recognise its existence."<sup>11</sup> Bernice Martin analyses how the management of home endowed woman with the "control of time, territory and resources in the home."<sup>12</sup> However, she did not take into account the ambiguous position of the husband.

In spite of the power a woman is informally entitled to, the wife had the figure of the master of the house<sup>13</sup> as a permanent reference.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, a husband's taste, preferences and determinations were posited as a ultimate norm for the ruling of home: This advertisement of *Pudim Royal* (Royal Pudding) exemplifies this point: "My husband has always been quite demanding. He insists on trying different dishes at every meal. That's why I use...."

However, a housewife should have enough skills to balance his 'rules' with her own preferences, trying to accommodate both. They should be skilled in making the things as they pleased giving the husbands the impression of obeying him, and the more subtly and efficiently such manipulations were done, the more 'feminine' she would be considered.<sup>15</sup>

In such context, the housewife's role must also be counterpointed to the figure of the servants, with whom she also entertained an ambiguous relationship. Without denying the hierarchical domination from a woman over other, the issue is not resumed in the consequent unbalanced power relationship derived from social class. There must also be considered the silent struggle between two women over the symbolic power conferred by the management of the house, in Martin's terms. Or else the housewife's against the possibility of the servant shaping the family in her own way.

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<sup>10</sup> The category Housewife was absent from Academic literature until the 1970s, when the works of Anne Oakley, (*Housewife*) in England and Helena Lopata (*Occupation Housewife*), in the United States were published. Housework has been seen as the expression of women's exploitation, or as a housewife's source of guilt. It has also been considered as a way to express her love and sentiments for the family. Authors have discussed whether it can be considered work, and whether it is productive or not. It has been 'dissected' in its minimal aspects, measured and its efficiency evaluated. For an extensive review of this matter see among others, MOLINEUX, 1979. KALUZYNSKA, 1980; JACKSON, 1992.

<sup>11</sup> MARTIN, 1984.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. : 26

<sup>13</sup> In case of the spinster who remained living with the parents, this figure could be the father or even an elder brother.

<sup>14</sup> Roland Barthes' comments about the woman's magazine *Elle*, could be easily applied to the Brazilian middle-class home in the 1950s: "the feminine world of [home is] a world without men, but entirely constituted by the gaze of man BARTHES, 1972: 51.

<sup>15</sup> See the discussion about Femininity at the Introduction and more chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis.

## *Domestic Servants*

Brazilian advertisements were directed to housewives, they promised to alleviate their burden and seldom mention domestic servants, who actually had the worst part of the domestic duties.<sup>16</sup>

In the 1950s, the majority of middle-class homes had at least one, and frequently several servants. One usually did the cooking and cleaning, another looked after the small children, laundry was seldom done at home. Usually a laundress was hired to come once a week bringing the clean clothes, already ironed, and taking the dirty ones to wash at her home.

Although there is no empirical evidence about the division of domestic tasks (between housewife and servant) housewives might not report that they were idle at home. The amount of housework varied according to particular situations such as number of servants, number and age of children, existence of relatives at home<sup>17</sup>

The housewife administered the house, did what Di Leonardo calls 'the work of kinship'<sup>18</sup> and supervised child care — such as the sterilising of things when babies, and later their homework. However, the burden of domestic chores was the servant's exclusive responsibility.

## *The Servant Problem*

Nonetheless domestic servants were considered 'a problem' – they were “difficult to get,” “difficult to trust, left just at the moment when you need them most”, (“no one wants to be a servant any more”, “they prefer to work in a factory just for the wage, rather than in a family house where they also get free lodging and food”)<sup>19</sup> Actually, it seems that for different reasons, domestic servants had constantly been considered as 'the problem':

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<sup>16</sup> Probably they were copied from or inspired from American ones, because most of the products announced had foreign trade marks.

<sup>17</sup> If an elder male relative could mean a greater burden, a woman relative would bring domestic help. In spite of the popular ditto '*Quem casa quer casa*' (who marries wants a home), living with their parents at the beginning of married life was a very common strategy to save money, even among the middle classes. See ABREU, 1980. On the other hand, poor, widow or sick parents could often live with married children.

<sup>18</sup> This is particularly important in Brazilian context. See DI LEONARDO, 1987; and BRUSCHINI, 1983.

<sup>19</sup> The question of domestic servants have been extensively researched in Brazil in the context of feminist studies. ALMEIDA, 1982; FARIAS, 1983; SAFFIOTI, 1978; AZEREDO, 1989 are some of the Brazilian studies about this theme, or the relationship between the mistress of the house and her servant. I am aware that we have no studies, in a historical perspective, dealing with this question in the 1950s.

careless, lazy, obtuse, arrogant – the list of their faults had always been lengthy.<sup>20</sup> To understand this issue some points are proposed for consideration.

Firstly, the ever present idea that it was a symptom of disruption of an ideal order. A nostalgic idea that 'once upon a time' everyone 'knew their place' in the social order, and were glad about it: few were born to master and the majority to serve. Therefore, servants were careful, diligent, humble and faithful. Literature is full of examples of 'Uncle Remus', 'Uncle Tom'<sup>21</sup> – dedicated humble slaves eager to serve their masters. The Brazilian equivalent are the *mãe pretas* (black mother) – slave wet-nurses – and the *preto velho* (old black man) – an idealised old man possessing a great natural wisdom.<sup>22</sup> Even unconsciously slavery is considered as part of the ideal order, even for those who would consciously reject this idea.<sup>23</sup>

The servant problem was perceived as one more symptom of a changing society, with significant moral implications. Authors of religious manuals, whether traditional or modern considered domestic work as the best job for the poor: living with a family would provide a safe shelter for inexperienced, ill-educated girls.<sup>24</sup> They were unanimous in condemning factories as morally dangerous places.

For Soares D'Azevedo, lower-class women must be limited to domestic service, and he regrets that even that 'divine order' is being subverted. He blamed the mistress of the house and her daughters – who "prefer to spend all day outside the home either working or at leisure" – for this crisis:

*[C]ooks, waiters, housemaids, nannies, laundresses observe that the mistress of the house and her daughters are not interested in domestic affairs. They prefer to spend all day outside home either working or at leisure. The servants envy this kind of freedom, which stirs up an 'itch' to emulate them. Therefore they leave the domestic work looking for places at workshops or in a trade. By the way, there they will work less to earn more, having also the evenings for leisure.*

This last comment is enough to shed light on the situation, since domestic service, unlike other jobs, had no regulations concerning wages or working time. The author took for granted the conditions of domestic work, as they were to be kept unchanged, and had not a

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<sup>20</sup> It goes beyond the limits of this thesis to analyse the question in depth, since the perception about its cause has varied in time and space.

<sup>21</sup> From 'Uncle Remus Tales' and Harriet Beecher Stowe's 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.'

<sup>22</sup> These idealised figures have an important place in the pantheon of *Umbanda* — an Afro-Brazilian religion.

<sup>23</sup> In 1953, a report resumed the issue: *Servants are no longer like the ones we used to have 15 years ago. Nowadays they look for the job which best suit them [it is not a housewife's right to choose the servant who best suit her, is the implicit scandalised message], servants want to earn a lot working just a little. Now, they invented the right to take the Sundays off. Housewives must agree with everything, never daring to complain.* A Cigarra, 1953.

<sup>24</sup> It was not taken into account that these girls were easy prey for the young men of the house — practice inherited from slavery. Therefore, becoming pregnant was not an infrequent fact among young servants. Literature is replete of such examples.

single word to say about the exploitation of servants or the low wages they earned. M.M. Desmarais, a more progressive author, regrets that even countryside girls did not want to be servants anymore – as if it were their 'natural' destiny.<sup>25</sup> Paradoxically, the only exception was Gustavo Corção, a Catholic writer reputed to be politically very conservative. In his book '*Claro Escuro*' the chapter "*A Gata Borrallheira*" is dedicated to this issue.<sup>26</sup>

He emphasises that the domestic servant epitomises what he calls "the greatest scandal of the century"

*"she is the poor person brought from the slums for the middle-class home. The same poor person to whom the Church was claiming attention since the Rerum Novarum."*<sup>27</sup>

The treatment given to the servants in Catholic homes makes them deserve the names of "factories of injustice" or "schools of civic hostility." Their children learn "the lesson of assumed selfishness; the exercise of class conflict; the 'schedule' of capitalism – this infectious pessimism which will give bitter fruits later in public life or in the political field."<sup>28</sup> He uses analogous images to Roberto Da Matta – the relationship between house and street to illustrate his arguments:

*There is a symmetrical relationship between children and servants. The children 'explode' the house, overflow its limits and go from house to town. The servants came from town to the house. The children are the donation that the house gives to the town; the cook is the person that the town entrusts to the house. In these terms the unbalance between the two situations is striking.*<sup>29</sup>

For Corção, like the husband and the wife, the servant is linked to the family by means of a moral pact and thus, becomes a 'natural' member of home, albeit her dubious position.<sup>30</sup> Corção foresees [and fears] the time when the domestic servant will also be 'proletarianized' with the same rights given by the 'town' as other workers already had.<sup>31</sup> Since

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<sup>25</sup> DESMARAIS, 1955.

<sup>26</sup> 'Literally 'The Ashpan Cat.' a more traditional name of the fairy tale Cinderella. CORÇÃO, 1958: 191 - 203. It is interesting to observe that in Brazil this fairy tale is either called '*Gata Borrallheira*' or '*Cinderella*' - a word whose implicit link with ashes is not clear in Portuguese. It is my hypothesis that these names are differently associated with the same character in the popular imaginary: Cinderella is the character at the moment of the ball, dancing and later marrying the Charming prince. In the mass media, Cinderella is the name given to the [poor] girl involved in cases of hypergamic marriages; whilst the *Ashpan Cat* seems to name the humble ragged girl doing the domestic hard chores. It is associated with the same figure, up to the moment when she is transformed by the fairy's wand. This explains the name of Corção's chapter.

<sup>27</sup> CORÇÃO, 1985:192.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*:193 and 201, respectively.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*:194.

<sup>30</sup> He rightfully perceives that a family is linked not by biological ties, but rather by social ones which he considers 'moral ties'. *Ibid.*:192-193.

<sup>31</sup> It is important to note that this was a time when the rural worker was not yet under the protection of the Labour Law (work timetable, retirement allowance and minimum wages). Contrary to the favourable position of Corção, the majority of

it was not the case, the servant was neither a mere worker nor a family helpmate – as the spinster daughters and sisters used to be.

He regrets that middle-class homes could only run at the expense of the more striking social injustice — the servant's marginalization. In this sense the slave's situation was better than the servant's one: "The first were 'humanely ill-treated' whilst the seconds are 'inhumanely' well-treated,"<sup>32</sup> for the bourgeois housewife it seems that a sub-humankind was created by God to be put at her service [and at her discretion]. From this axiom logically derives that the masters have all the rights and the servants the duty of serving them well. And Corção ironizes: these servants have to reach the highest degree of sanctity to please the lady of the house:

*The ideal situation for these families – firmly rooted in class prejudices – would be to have a Saint Catherine of Siena in the kitchen, Saint Scholastic at the sink and Saint Little Thérèse arranging the house. Hence the whole family would be dispensed of being equally saints or simply honest.*

Facing such a situation, Corção deplors that "for the majority of priests the servant's life style were not framed as a familial moral problem, being regarded as a grave sin. He never heard that in a Confession a priest reproached the lack of love from a Catholic woman for her servant, whilst in every confession women were asked about birth control."<sup>33</sup>

It is worth examining Corção's arguments which distinguish him from the other religious authors in relation to these issues. At first glance, albeit in political opposite fields he seems to put social sins above moral ones, like the members of JUC.<sup>34</sup> However, their considerations about moral and social sins end at this superficial likeness: both were equally emphatic in assuming the Social Doctrine of the Church and its condemnation of Capitalism, but they come from opposite theoretical approaches in their analysis.

For the JUC the Catholic social doctrine had to embody Marxist theory in the diagnosis and solution of social problems, envisaged as deeply rooted in iniquitous

Catholic authors would regard it with suspicion, fearing the moral dangers it would bring to them - perhaps socialism at home.

<sup>32</sup> CORÇÃO, 1985:194-195. Many of Corção's arguments match the analyses which would later be made by feminist researchers under a different theoretical framework. See footnote 2.

<sup>33</sup> "unrestrained sexuality is not the only or the worst moral evil of modern families. Rather, it is the practice of injustice – either in the way they treated their servants or in the use of '*pistolão*' to obtain better jobs for their children – which is the most terrible of all. I do not hesitate in proclaiming that these practices are more abominable, more perverse and more deeply immoral than the 'sins rooted in the misery of the flesh', which are stigmatised by the good Catholic people. CORÇÃO, 1985:197 and 196. He even says that " a family structured on the basis of social injustice is as bad or even worse than the irregular conjugal unions which are the fruit of divorce or concubinage." At that time such comment sounded almost like heresy. It is important to note that only a writer with his religious reputation could dare to say it, and his purpose certainly was to shock his readers, making them to reflect about the theme, rather than to subvert the Catholic official position. For an explanation of '*pistolao*' see the introduction of this thesis

<sup>34</sup> For an analysis of JUC (*Juventude Universitária Católica*) see chapter 1.

economic structures. Only by changing these structures would it be possible to surpass class conflicts, and thus install an equitable society in accordance with the Gospels.

Gustavo Corção represented the new position of the conservative Church – opposed to social iniquities, because they feared them as a fertile ground for Communism. However, these sins were not social but another form of particular moral sins to be solved by individual practice of Catholic doctrine. For him, Capitalism is wrong because its rules differ from Christian principles, and the Church's ultimate government. However, once people were equitable, fair in their treatment towards servants and employees, charitable and respectful of the moral principles of social coexistence – better opportunities for the better endowed person (and not for the socially better acquainted) – these problems would be solved. This, notwithstanding, no other religious author had been so incisive in the defence of the domestic servant's rights at that time as he was.

### *Domestic Service – A Natural Feminine Job*

Behind the discussions of the 'servant's problem' was the idea that domestic chores were a woman's issue – something deeply embedded in 'feminine nature.' Once a woman had some information about it, only external influences or a bad character could explain why it was not well done. A manual dating from 1898 (10 years after slavery was abolished) put the issue in this terms:

*Increasing vanity and arrogance are at the roots of servant's idleness, absentmindedness and infidelity. Besides, socialism is becoming more and more popular. Consequently, there is a strong opposition against masters in general, making it more difficult to keep authority over servants. If it is a hard task for an older and experienced lady, it will be even more so for a young, inexperienced, newly-wed lady.*<sup>35</sup>

At the turn of the 1940s, Isabel Serrano de Almeida was again speaking about the 'servant problem' which was not a matter of insufficiency but of quality. Paradoxically, many housewives preferred to take young inexperienced girls (most not yet in their teens) chiefly from the countryside, so that they could 'shape' the servant in their way. That is, more than learning how to perform tasks in someone's style, she would indoctrinated to be extremely docile, humble and submissive:

*I prefer those humble dull servants who come from the countryside...they come here without knowing anything.[...] I don't like those from the city, they think they are too clever to learn anything; they are arrogant, independent, ill-behaved...*

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<sup>35</sup> CLESER, 1898 : 241. Ruth Schwartz Cowan, speaking about the American 1920s, pointed out that the servant problem "arose from a shortage not of help but of 'good help' – by which the complainer almost always meant someone who was (1) beyond adolescence; (2) experienced and skilful and (3) subservient. COWAN, 1989: 28



It replicates an analogous situation among *namorados*, in the 1950s.<sup>36</sup> Actually this preference for the humble inexperience of the young servant masks a strategy for improvement of the domination process. These young servants had been taken to be fostered, to have an opportunity to study. They would be exchanging food and shelter for housework. However, the reality was different. This kind of rhetoric concealed situations of minor or major exploitation.<sup>37</sup>

This was legitimated by *Compadrio* – a particular “type of relationship set up between individuals primarily [...] through participation in the ritual of Catholic baptism.”<sup>38</sup> Special bonds were created between godparents and godchildren, thereby respectively called '*padrinho/madrinha*' (godfather/godmother) and '*afilhado*' (godchild). Ideally, this is a kind of spiritual parenthood pre-supposing duties complementary to biological parenthood. A particular relationship was engendered between both parents (biological and spiritual) who became '*compadres*'. Etymologically, the word means 'joined parents', although it has a broader social meaning, setting up ties of reciprocity which extend beyond spiritual cares. These reciprocal relations of variable complexity must be understood in the broader context of 'patron-client relationship' patterns.

Two aspects of *Compadrio* help us to understand the specific situation analysed here. Individuals mobilised these relationships to ease mobility inside and outside their villages. It was expected that a relative (biological or spiritual) who migrates, should take over the responsibility of making a bridge between urban and rural contexts for the rest of the family. Asymmetric relationships, connecting individuals from different social classes, generated a pattern of reciprocity where each partner offered the other something one's fellow did not have at their disposal: friendship, unrestricted loyalty (chiefly in political matters), from one side; economic help, job, from the other.

Therefore, middle-class godmothers of poor girls could easily take them to live in 'a better milieu', to study and learn a trade. Actually several of those girls were forever kept as unpaid servants, in accordance with the rhetoric that they were almost members of the family:

*I'm her godmother... she tells me her problems, she is not kept alone in her premises. She knows everyone in our families and everyone likes her very*

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<sup>36</sup> See chapter 2 of this thesis. Some men looked for girls in their early teens to be their '*namoradas*'. The discourse used was the same: they wanted to 'shape' their girl-friends. She would learn how to please her 'master' in everything, replicating his ideas, viewpoint, ethos; in addition to learning how to be submissive and docile. This situation was also very common in M. Delly's romantic novels, such as *Escrava ou Rainha*. However, there, men never succeeded in their intents, since religion gave the heroines such a strength of character, that although being 'mastered' by them in the 'things of the world'; women always converted men to her higher spiritual values. See chapter 5 of this thesis.

<sup>37</sup> "I prefer a kind of servant that has already disappeared – the humble servant such as my parents use to have when I was a child... today they are arrogant, malcontents ... and they want to imitate everything we do." FARIAS, 1983: 114.

<sup>38</sup> MINTZ & WOLF, 1950. Authors says that the relationship between *compadres* and *comadres* "outweighs the god-parent-god-child relationship." For some additional bibliographic sources see the Introduction of this thesis.

*much... when my children are taking examinations, she shares our expectations, supporting them, praying for their success... She really is almost a member of the family.*<sup>39</sup>

One of the statements points to the physical space in which a servant should stay.

*"one could imagine that she is the lady of the house..."*<sup>40</sup>



As Suely Kofes de Almeida<sup>41</sup> points out, everything in the relationship between servants and the housewife's family (and house) supposed an ideal invisibility: her space should be restricted to the kitchen, backyard and her room, except when tidying the house. So, 'not being kept in her premises' implied that she was allowed to circulate everywhere. For the housewife it was a definite proof that she was 'a member of the family.' According to Almeida this 'invisibility' means 'the negation of the servant's existence'. This negation occurs on two levels: first, the servant's space could not be confused with the housewife's space, what has to do with differences of social class; second, the negation of her affectivity and sexuality, that is the denial of her feminine condition. Moreover, any

contact among the servant and the housewives' sons or husband must be avoided. As the servants substitute the housewife in domestic chores, this 'taboo' prevents their roles from being confused.<sup>42</sup>

In reality these discourses veil the worst form of exploitation which goes beyond the lack of payment. It subsumed the vicarious participation in familial life and a home not of her own, and generates an absolute abdication of one's own private life, family, or the possibility of creating affective bonds among her peer group.

The relationship between family and servants, based on the ideology of favour and compadrio, the lack of legal protection in this kind of labour made quite ambiguous the servant's position in the middle-class homes. The embodiment of the altercentered-subject

<sup>39</sup> FARIAS, 1983: 110-11.

<sup>40</sup> *A Cigarra*, 1953.

<sup>41</sup> ALMEIDA, 1982: 192.

<sup>42</sup> The ironic legends displayed the prejudice against the use of the family's premises by the servant.

role was compulsory for the servant – not invested with the wife/mother love ideology but as the mandatory role that social class reserved for her.<sup>43</sup>

The servant problem has its roots in the shift between housewife's expectations and servant's actuality. It is assumed that housework is inscribed into 'feminine nature,' and that, therefore every woman should know how to perform it. However, the expectations of that performance are related to social class and status group. As a rule there was no institutionalised training available to skill the servants; their accomplishment come through practice. It generated a near incompatibility between housewife's and servant's life styles, tastes and standards of domestic skills:



*"one could imagine that she is the lady of the house chatting with her dear husband..."*

*The housemaid does not know how to use or care for the domestic appliances; to care for the floor, to handle or clean small decorations. The cooker, unless she had already worked before, is only used to cook the plain food of her own house. She ignores more sophisticated ingredients and even ordinary dishes of wealthier people.... Therefore, the housewives says, it is easy to know if they had worked as servants before, and even to recognise the life style of their previous bosses.<sup>44</sup>*

Thus a good servant is one who had been re-socialised out of her own social class; who had abdicated of signs and codes of her own social group. Instead, she tried to assimilate those of another group whose life style she could only vicariously share. Consequently the perception of servants' poor skills, their lack of care, rather than being considered as signs of character defects — laziness, carelessness, envy — they should be regard as originating from class differences. Isabel Serrano points out the other side of the servant problem, by analysing the

<sup>43</sup>Rachel Jardim speaking about an old servant, encapsulated their situation: *She had always lived – since early childhood – in homes which weren't hers. After growing up, she always worked in other's houses. Few things [ hers?] displayed in a room which didn't belong to her. On her birthdays a cake made with flour given to her. In her coffin, the blouse handed down by me.* JARDIM, 1973 : 81.

<sup>44</sup> SAFFIOTI, 1978: 57-58.

'mistress problem,' that is, mistresses who never have servants because no-one endures working for them."<sup>45</sup> She repeats accusations already made in 1898, by Vera Cleser:

*There are some ladies who, even if the servant does her best it still seems insufficient to them. Even if servant exceeds herself in her task, or dedicates day and night to domestic service, those ladies still feel unsatisfied, ill-humoured, discontent.*<sup>46</sup>

Such intolerance makes more sense when thought in the context of the mistress' fears of losing control over the situation, always guaranteed when the other is incompetent. Thus, it is also possible to venture that the ever present phrase "to not leave it in servant's hands" was not only a matter of the servant's lack of skills. Rather, it masked the housewife's fear of transferring to the servant, bit by bit, all the power over the house.

### *Domestic Servants As Theme Of Embroidery Patterns*

The portrait of servants in these patterns were either the glorification of the old *mãe preta* or the poor skills of the new servants.<sup>47</sup> They also feared its opposite represented by the



'*Empregada Grãfina*' (The Snob Servant.) the materialisation of a new kind of worker foreseen as a consequence of modernity. News about 'American servants' who were professionals, drove their own cars and earned fabulous wages, already peopled Brazilian housewives' imaginations.



In this last case, the major problem seemed to be the attenuation of the differences between servants and housewives. Middle-class housewives feared the end of home hierarchy since 'snob' servants looked like the mistress of the house: with the same skin colour, and same way of dressing. A woman in stilettos doing housework is a very meaningful image. This is the detail which underlines the possibility of domestic work (and its related tasks) being transformed into a job like any other.

<sup>45</sup> "Those intolerant ladies who shout at their servants in account of frivolous minutiae; or those who usually delay their payment for two even three months SERRANO, 1949.

<sup>46</sup> CLESER, 1898: 247.

<sup>47</sup> Illustrations on the next pages.

This set of transfers has a young clumsy black servant girl as its theme.<sup>48</sup>



<sup>48</sup> This set also has a pattern for embroidering sacs for the bread and for the meat board (Illustration on the next page).  
O Jornal das Moças., from 22/05/ to 15/06/1952.



A year before, the same magazine had published a similar set of patterns around a young black boy. Rich families used to have such 'moleques' go on errands. The set is introduced with contradictory words : " O *Moleque Tonteira* [Irresponsible Young Black Boy] is a naughty boy. He is a good, ready, obedient and even pleasing boy...but look what happened:<sup>49</sup>



<sup>49</sup> *Moleque Tonteira*. *O Jornal das Moças* May, 1951. The towel for the stove reinforces the stereotype about poor black persons from the shanty towns, who only care about dancing and having a good time. A prejudice very common in the 1950s when the 'escolas de samba' epitomised for the middle class and elite the irresponsibility of Brazilian poor people.

The contrast of these sets picturing young irresponsible black adolescents to *Mãe Preta*, theme of another set of patterns is explicit:

*After the 'moleque' whose naughty deeds we have shown, we introduce the Mãe Preta. Though we did not know her, we learned to respect her qualities from what we read in novels and anecdotes. She is indelibly engraved in our minds as a symbol of kindness and tenderness.*

In another similar set of patterns she is introduced as "symbol of a distant past, nurse of our grandmothers, dignified example of a worker."<sup>50</sup> This idealised model of servant from past times – coincidentally an old slave woman – makes the caricature of young contemporary servants more telling.

### *The Myth of the Servant Replacement*

"I have four electrical maids: they are always ready to work, they are energetic, economic and do a perfect job."<sup>53</sup> In the 1950s when this kind of advertisements emerged in Brazil, people who could afford to buy those equipment had more than one domestic servant, and actually did not need them. These advertisements proposing the replacement of servants by electric appliances provide a good example of the adaptation of foreign themes to the Brazilian reality. Possibly inspired by American or European advertisements, they did not appeal to the fantasy of a middle class which seldom (or never) had servants, but to a middle class which only eventually could not count on them.<sup>54</sup>



"This electrical maid baked cakes for me,"<sup>51</sup> This exclamation is made more eloquent by the illustration: a joyful woman, looking at a beautiful cake, makes a Brazilian popular gesture which indicates that one has worked enough to merit a good rest.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>50</sup> *O Jornal das Moças*: 23, 18/1/ 1951.

<sup>51</sup> *Walita. Seleções* 19 (113):134, June 1951.

<sup>52</sup> It is 'done by resting the thumbs near or under the armpits and wiggling the outstretched fingers of the hands.' In HARRISON-BROSE, 1983: 113-114. The implication is 'I got it done (easily or with some expertise) therefore I can afford to be idle'.

<sup>53</sup> *Walita. Seleções* 20 (115) August 1951.

<sup>54</sup> [T]he myth of the mechanical servant furnished people who had never employed a servant, and were never likely to, with the illusion of a substitute at least as good as a servant of flesh and blood. It allowed housewives to believe that what they found themselves doing was not really work at all FORTY, 1986 : 214.



Contrary to the European situation, as analysed by Adrian Forty,<sup>55</sup> in Brazil not everyone who had domestic servants could easily afford to buy all of them, at least the more expensive ones.<sup>56</sup> Thus their purchasing would possibly be part of a joint project of the couple, which explains why they were not used by servants, and stayed as signs of status.

Adrian Forty calls this theme the myth of servant replacement which has not only been spread by advertisers to sell their products, but also by social analysts who assumed that those appliances were invented to replace the absent servant. As he says, no-one could in fact believe that maids and machines were interchangeable. In spite of the illustrations of advertisements everybody knew that much had to be done before and after the machine did its service. Preparing and cleaning still meant hard work to be done.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, this sort of argument might exercise a great appeal even in the Brazilian situation — “When it is my servant's day off, my blender stays on duty.”<sup>58</sup>

Still their appeal goes beyond the 'advantages' over the flesh-and-bone servants, the pressure over the housewife had significantly increased

*[Since the 1920s] no longer it was acceptable to leave the administration of the house in the hands of servants, even if a housewife did no manual labour herself: it became her obligation to dedicate her energy to providing constant supervision of and instruction to her servants. If the house was not spotlessly clean and tidy, if the children were not always neatly dressed, if the clothes were not always well-washed and pressed, if an appetising dinner was not always awaiting her husband upon his return she would be failing in her essential duties.*<sup>59</sup>

Moreover, these high standards became identified with love and caring. People felt pity for husbands and children 'left in the hands of a servant' (*que são deixados nas mãos de empregadas*). Likewise close relatives could also pity those wives/mothers who had to work and could not care for their homes (chiefly when it was due for reasons beyond their will, such as widowhood) having to be in strict dependence on servants.<sup>60</sup> A demanding husband 'does not eat a meal made just by the servant,' perceived as a careless meal. A caring and loving wife's/mother's hand is a subtle seasoning no-one can match.<sup>61</sup> In this

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<sup>55</sup> Adrian Forty analyses what he calls the myth of servant replacement spread by advertisements of electric appliances. He demonstrates that they were invented at a time when the number of domestic servants in service was still very high in England, and in fact these appliances were used by servants. FORTY, 1986 : 214.

<sup>56</sup> Contrary to servants whose wages were very low.

<sup>57</sup> FORTY, 1986 : 214.

<sup>58</sup> Walita blender. *O Cruzeiro* : 5 , 29 /8/1953.

<sup>59</sup> BESSE, 1983: 174.

<sup>60</sup> It is striking how this fact remains as an enduring reference to evaluate the work of servants: Good ones are those to whom one can leave everything in their hands, the house, the children, money (*entregar tudo nas mãos dela: casa, filhos, dinheiro*). They are praised for having been a helpful hand to the management of home and the rearing of children — usually staying with the family for the whole life. The contrary are the ones to whom one cannot leave anything in their account. (*Não se pode deixar nada por conta dela.*)

<sup>61</sup> It replicates an idea also present in romantic novels. See chapter 5 of this thesis.

sense, appliances like blenders and food mixers could help the lady of the house in her tasks:

*Now, I always have a 'surprise' for them : My children are like any other children. They adore chocolate cake, fruit juices, desserts and ice creams...Now it is very easy to make them happy.*<sup>62</sup>

*"Now Daddy prefers coming home to lunch. He does not miss a meal at home anymore, because everyday we have new and different dishes waiting for him."*<sup>63</sup>

With the help of such appliances, she could merit the award of keeping the husband more time at home – a task the normative literature also preached.<sup>64</sup> To be a good housewife, even when counting either with one or several servants should be a job of love. Servants should be one more person to be under her responsibilities;<sup>65</sup> one more person to be morally guided and religiously instructed.

### *The Learning of Perfect Housewifery*

New exigencies over housewifery and motherhood surpassed what was 'naturally' inscribed in feminine nature. Normative literature disseminated the idea that a woman should be educated to assume her 'high mission' since it could no longer be considered a task for amateurs. Such education was regarded as a moral, patriotic and religious imperative,<sup>66</sup> yet an excuse for woman's exclusion from formal education. As Soares D'Azevedo pointed out : "By studying philosophy, a woman does not learn to change a child's nappies. Neither in a course of psychology will she learn how to cook a perfect steak with French fries."<sup>67</sup>

In a previous book, the same author described the ideal day in the life of a perfect girl – fully dedicated to the management of the home. Not even in sleep does she stop worrying about the 'inept' servants and 'cowboy' suppliers. It provides a good account of the middle-class domestic quotidian in the 1950s.

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<sup>62</sup> Walita. *O Cruzeiro* : 18c, 4/7/ 1955. Among their 'children' is her husband, repeating a common representation about man( ...as being just one more child ). The role of a housewife is therefore that of an extended mother, as advocated by the religious manuals. (See chapter :)

<sup>63</sup> Arno blender. *Cinelândia* 7 (124): undercover, January 1958.

<sup>64</sup> See chapter 3.

<sup>65</sup> It was very common that the mistress of the house was formally entrusted with this responsibility by the servant's parents, mainly those from the countryside. They also could impose [strict ] limits upon their daughter controlling their outings, and her relationship with friends and ' *namorados*.'

<sup>66</sup> A good example is provided by Isabel de Almeida Serrano, who says in the foreword of her domestic manual: " In these times when everything conspires against traditions with the tendency to take woman outside the home, it is imperative to struggle with tenacity to transform home into a welcoming environment; to instil in mothers and wives the idea of the necessity for a firm moral and domestic education for the benefit of family stability and happiness." SERRANO, 1949 : 6.

<sup>67</sup> D'AZEVEDO, 1948 : 191.

*My daughter got out of bed very early; gave a joyful hello to the canary in its cage; severely censured the cook for the mess on the stove, and asked why the litter bin had not been put in front of the house yet.*

*New flowers – she had cut herself – would be put in front of the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. Later, she would get the broom or the dusting brush to finish the cleaning done by the servants.*

*When her brothers and sisters came downstairs, their breakfast was already ready on the table. Then it is the moment to start the endless way from room to room, scrutinising every small corner or hidden parts to see if it had been properly cleaned. Occasionally, she would interrupt this task to play a piece by Schubert.*

*The work would be harder near lunch time. She had phoned the greengrocer and supervised the cook. After lunch she could have a moment free to listen to the radio, but very soon, she would be working quite hard again.*

*At the end of the day she would probably be very tired but also happy for having fulfilled her duties. She would go to her room, kneel to pray and quite often she would sleep without finishing her rosary. It wouldn't matter, for Our Lady will come to make the girl dream, giving her a gentle good-night kiss.*

*Possibly she would be dreaming about the laundress who brought some wrong pieces of clothes, or the rascal baker who tried to give them old bread as if it was new...<sup>68</sup>*

Two ideas underline this account. First, the idea that housewifery means having the knowledge for perfect management of home, more than for doing the chores herself. It embodies the popular maxim that 'those who do not know how to do it cannot demand it' — a widely used justification for the exigency of domestic expertise in girls who as future housewives would not need to do such tasks. Second, the prejudice about the inability of servants to perform their tasks properly. The way it is stressed suggests the difference between women of different classes: (she censured the cook because of the mess in the stove): only educated women (in a lady-like manner) know the importance of paying attention to smaller or hidden details. Such difference is also stressed in the free disposition of the daughter's time as opposed to the servant's strict timetable exemplified also by another lady's accomplishment (sometimes she plays a piece by Schubert).

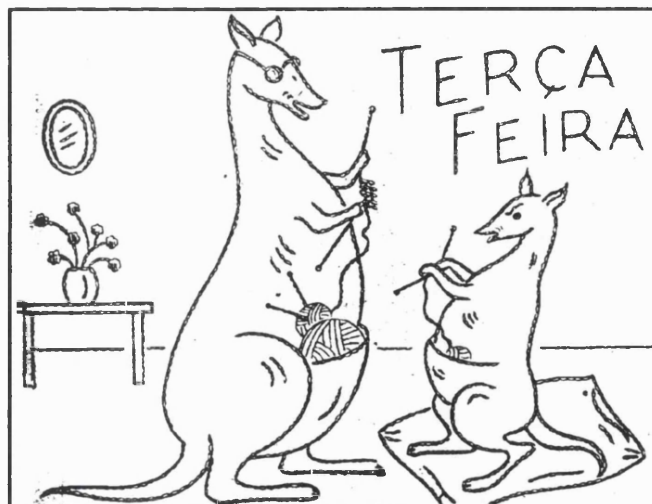
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<sup>68</sup> D'AZEVEDO, 1948: 55 - 56. In another book, the author gives a similar account, about a girl who lives in the countryside, in charge of home because of her mother's illness. In both examples the girls are in their twenties and are also in charge of several duties in the local parish. ( D'AZEVEDO, 1949 : 246- 248 )

A set of embroidery patterns for tea-towels aptly illustrates this reproduction of domestic knowledge and the daughter's schooling in perfect housewifery. It shows a 'Mother Kangaroo and her Kangaroo Daughter's weekly timetable.'



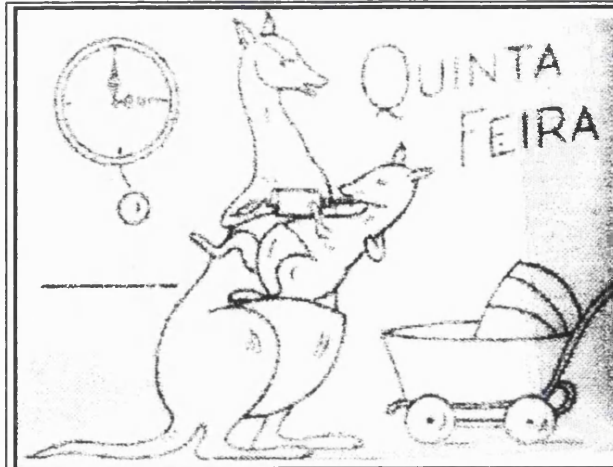
On Monday mother takes the daughter to school, denoting the need of formal education.



On Tuesday, mother and daughter knit together – that is besides formal learning, woman must have expertise in handicrafts. If the first is provided by teachers, the second is informally taught by mothers, usually by imitation



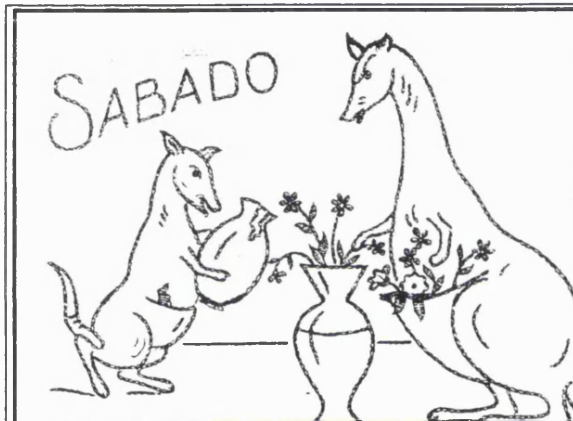
On Wednesday, mother and daughter go shopping for fruit and vegetables, and probably practical information about how to choose them will be provided.



On Thursday, mother feeds the baby.



On Friday, mother and daughter clean the house.



Finally on Saturday, the daughter learns how to arrange flowers in the vase.

The choice of the animal to illustrate this set is curious because of the associations with what could be seen as the perfect (close) relationship between mother and children, the close relationship recommended by counsellors, and disclosed by many ways in the mass media.

However, more than projecting housewifery as being innate to woman's nature, or skills learned by mere imitation, the 1950s transformed them into technical and scientific skills to be learned at the Universities.<sup>69</sup> Although these courses had not had the same influence in Brazil as in the United States,<sup>70</sup> the substitution of the empirical knowledge of

<sup>69</sup> For the course of Home Economics in Brazil see LOPES, 1995.

<sup>70</sup> Since the nineteenth century in America the idea that housewifery demanded specialised and scientific skills had been developed, as a result of the new courses of Domestic Science or Home Economics. In order to legitimate the new profession, its pioneers who had founded the course as a result of gender discrimination, had to give it a masculine

housewives by the word of specialists has also happened in Brazil, rather as a consequence of the importation of printed matter of magazines, and advertisements of foreign goods or trade marks. Household exigencies had significantly increased after the theories of germs and vitamins, the popularisation of notions of nutrition<sup>71</sup> and pedagogy. Therefore the job of motherhood suffered the greater pressures.

### *The Scientific Mother*

In the nineteenth century hygienist medical discourse was mainly concerned with the definition of roles and ideal behaviour in the family.<sup>72</sup> Therefore, a new model of family, of woman, and a new conception of childhood started to be built. Children were no more considered just as miniature adults; rather, they started to be regarded as subjects with particular demands and needs. As Margaret Rago pointed out, in the nineteenth century, through the discussion about surrogate breast feeding, a scientific discourse of the 'valorisation of women's role as The Guardian of Family'<sup>73</sup> took place, importing the European cult of domesticity to Brazil.<sup>74</sup>

Children were regarded as future citizens. Therefore their rearing, and concerns about their health and education should not be considered private matters whose interest was limited to the familiar domain. Instead they should be regarded as public issues of paramount importance to the future of the 'Fatherland'. Consequently, the discourse about motherhood also changed:

*[Since the inter-war period] doctors and educators influenced by the eugenics movement campaigned for the instruction of mothers in scientific principles of health care so as to make them competent to fulfil their new patriotic duty and social function of perfecting the race.<sup>75</sup>*

On the other hand the Catholic Church did not fully endorse this discourse. As shown in chapter 3, although they considered eugenics a serious matter, the idea of the State ruling the family and the education of women for such concerns went radically against

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<sup>71</sup> For the popularisation of the theory of vitamins, and nutrition in general see APPLE, 1988; SHAPIRO, 1986; MATHEWS, 1987; For the question of vitamins, nutrition and sleeping habits in manuals for child care, see HARDYMENT, 1984. For the germs theory and modern notions of domestic hygiene see WRIGHT, 1975; MCCLARY, 1980; FORTY, 1986; MATHEWS, 1987.

<sup>72</sup> For the analysis of the hygienic medical discourse concerning women, family, childhood in Brazil, through the thesis presented to the '*Faculdade de Medicina do Rio de Janeiro*' and '*Faculdade de Medicina da Bahia*' see COSTA, 1982; GONÇALVES, 1987; RAGO, 1985 :chapter 2.

<sup>73</sup> RAGO, 1985: 75.

<sup>74</sup> See the Introduction of this thesis and also NEEDELL, 1987, this author criticises the importation of an ideology which had arisen in an urban industrialised context to a rural patriarchal society.

<sup>75</sup> BESSE, 1983: 205.

their preaching as well as their political interests.<sup>76</sup> This explains why the priest and author of normative literature, Geraldo Pires de Souza,<sup>77</sup> deeply censured the teaching of 'Puericulture' at school.

Nevertheless the new role of the mother was adomed with the aura of a modern scientific profession based on highly developed skills and specialised knowledge. Since then a great emphasis was also placed on the educator-role of a mother. Contrary to previous ideas that it was due to their "fate, to God's will or the work of devil", future moral problems were regarded as lack of competence of the mother. The idea that in "the mother's hands rested the future of the Fatherland" become prevalent. "An enormous faith was placed in the power of women to resolve social problems and guarantee progress through the correct orientation of children."<sup>78</sup> Therefore, motherhood had to be a full-time job; and children, a woman's first concern, to be loved over the husband.

In general, these ideas were still prevalent at the beginning of the 1950s. Comparing the religious manuals that have been analysed in the previous chapters, it is possible to see that there is no difference between their ideas and those discussed by Susan Besse, for the previous decades. These manuals enveloped in deep religiosity the same eugenic concern, the same patriotic discourse, the same ideology about mother's role. The best example are the books of Soares D'Azevedo, who confesses to be too old-fashioned for the modern times.

Sérvulo da Figueira argues that in the 1950s the Brazilian family was still a hierarchical one.<sup>79</sup> Parents' relationship with their offspring were also underlined by the idea of intrinsic differences. Adults are different from children: they are the ones who know more and best about everything. Besides, their position also allows them to discipline children at their discretion. Gradually, the hierarchical family started to change towards a more egalitarian model.<sup>80</sup>

A major shift appeared with the 'psychologisation of family,' the popularisation of Freud's and Piaget's theories.<sup>81</sup> Eugenic and patriotic concerns were substituted by the

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<sup>76</sup> As was demonstrated in chapter 4, although they considered health and heredity serious matters to be taken into consideration in the choice of a suitor, they considered that the couple should have the last word, and that there were factors to consider that could minimise the importance of health fitness or of 'good' heredity. On the other hand, the Church struggled with all possible means against the interference of the State in the domains of health and education.

<sup>77</sup> His widely recommended book for Catholic families '*As Três Chamas do Lar*' was in its 6th edition in 1958 still repeating the arguments and mentioned a debate which was far distant in the 1950s.

<sup>78</sup> *ibid.* : 204

<sup>79</sup> FIGUEIRA . 1987: 17.

<sup>80</sup> As opposed to the egalitarian one. The characteristics of the 'egalitarian family' are: "identity is idiosyncratic; that is man and women perceive themselves as personally different nonetheless equal, as individuals. Personal differences subordinate and are perceived as more important than gender, age or position differences." For Sérvulo Figueira, that became the ideal model for the 1980s family. FIGUEIRA, *ibid.* My data suggest that this process started on the 1950s.

<sup>81</sup> In Europe and America, "the prosperity of the 1950s and 1960s - the 'You've never had it so good' decades - enabled parents to give time and money to their children in unprecedented quantities." HARDYMENT, 1984: 226.

feeling that the achievement of individual adjustment and well-being should be the principal goal of child bearing. Therefore, the previous discourse centred on discipline, strict rules, good behaviour was substituted by a primary concern with the children's will, pleasures, desires and self-realisation. In Brazil these ideas started to be disseminated by the media. Their incorporation into parents' concerns took longer, since these ideas were initially considered a foreign idiosyncrasy, some crazy invention not to be regarded seriously.

Nevertheless, from the 1950s on words like 'trauma', 'repression,' 'complexes' were incorporated into a middle-class parent's discourse. Parents started to be responsible not only for their children's education, and physical and moral health, but chiefly for their children's emotional well-being. New discussions would take place around the question of discipline and physical punishment, and the future emotional consequences of parental strictness. A healthy familiar environment was of overwhelming importance for children's future well-being. It was well pictured in an ironic chronicle by Rita Fusco who exaggerated the discourse of psychoanalysis, and the beliefs of its followers :

*Speaking about child-bearing, I don't know how I survived my parent's ignorance. How could they manage without these educational tricks... Nowadays we are full of problems thanks to the complexes acquired in childhood. Atomic bomb ? It is the result of some unjust slap on the face when one was young. And the economic crisis ? Perhaps a job of some children, who pierced a neighbour's eye, and had not been understood; in their hypersensitivity they, in their turn, did not understand why they were denied the dessert that day. Little things like that. As today there is a new educational fashion, we will not be good parents. due to our dark background. Our grandchildren will be very happy. We have tried hard with our children. They will be so much steadier and wiser that I cannot imagine how psychiatrists will manage in the future. For sure they will be jobless since everyone will understand the causes of everything: there will remain no morbid points in any life.<sup>82</sup>*

These contradictory precepts brought confusion and guilt for mothers. Instead of following her 'maternal instincts' a mother should heed the legitimate discourse of the specialists. Rita Fusco is confused. Following her instinct she gave a small slap on her daughter's hand; later she felt like saying sorry because she did not like the idea of slapping children. She committed two faults according to the pedagogic manuals she was reading. So she ironically concludes:

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<sup>82</sup> Rita Fusco, ' Modos e Modas.' *O Cruzeiro* 25 (1):3. Out. 18, 1952. (The title is a pun using the words *modos*=manners; and *moda*= fashion)



*At the end it is so hard slapping our children. They are always so nice, so sweet...But, if a great foreign doctor says that it is all right, we should never slap a child, it is wonderful! The wisest doctor reinforced our ashamed parental feelings – our extensive capacity to endure the naughty habits of our offspring. From now on, instead of guiltily hiding it from our neighbours, we will boast over it, stuffed with the great American knowledge. Dare to say we are weak. We have several scholars supporting us and giving the guarantee of our broad mental horizons, since everyone will understand the causes of everything: there will remain no morbid points in any life.*

Scientific child-rearing, concerned with causes instead of concentrating on the action itself, would make physical punishment unnecessary.<sup>83</sup>



This advertisement aptly illustrates this point. Physical punishment represented a failure in mother's job. Spanking children is a consequence of the mother's bad humor—a lack of a good digestive.

<sup>83</sup> Sal de Fruta Eno. *O Cruzeiro*. 26 (51): 44.

The breaking down of the hierarchical relationship between parents and children and the need to take children's needs into account are well epitomised by an earlier advertisement for baby hygiene products from 1945.<sup>84</sup> It depicts the mother lying on the

"Agora durma como uma boa mãezinha!"



**BEBÊ** - Ora, mãezinha! Não fique aborrecida por ter que ficar tanto no berço! Eu só quero que você compreenda o meu ponto de vista!

**MAMÃE** - Eu já compreendi! De tanto me mexer sempre no mesmo lugar, minha pele ficou tão irritada e dolorida que até tenho vontade de gritar!

**BEBÊ** - Está vendo, mamãe? Pois imagine só como a minha pele, tão mais delicada e sensível, fica no fim do dia! E agora -- ganha ou não ganha o Óleo e o Talco Johnson, para crianças?

**MAMÃE** - Claro que sim, meu bem! Então diga as condições!

**BEBÊ** - Ah, então vou usar o Óleo Johnson para crianças e o Talco Johnson para crianças!

**MAMÃE** - Está combinando, meu coração? Você vai ficar com a pele tão qual setim!

**BEBÊ** - Muito obrigado, mãezinha! E, mãe, eu também vou fazer uma coisa por você! Com os produtos Johnson para me livrar das desagradáveis irritações e lesões, mesmo que se sintam...



**ÓLEO JOHNSON para crianças**

**TALCO JOHNSON para crianças**



The dialogue between the two goes as follows:

[The baby] Well, dear mummy. Do not be upset for staying so long in the cot! I just want you to grasp *my* view point!

[The mother] I *already* have, From *moving* always in the same place, my skin became irritated and aches so much it makes me want to cry.

[The baby] Now mummy, shall I have this new talc for babies, or not?

The mother] Of course dear. **You can dictate your conditions.**

[The baby] I want lots of this pure and gentle oil to soften my skin, and plenty of talc to have it fresh and sweet.

<sup>84</sup> Advertisement of Johnson Oil and Johnson Talc. *Seleções* 10 (59) December, 1946. Emphasis in original.

The introduction of the Brazilian translation of the magazine *Reader's Digest* in 1942, had an important role in the changes in the way that familiar relationships was pictured for the readers. The difference between the advertisements published by *Seleções* and other magazines in the 1940s is striking. Other magazines expressed a more traditional emphasis accordingly to the traditional products they were marketing. Advertisements issued in *Seleções* reveal a directory of new habits, gestures and attitudes represented as modern; picturing familiar relationships which were linked to the introduction of new goods such as powdered milk, cereals, domestic appliances and hygiene products. The hypothesis is that more than the specialised articles published in national magazines it was the advertisements which helped the social fashioning of the modern family's roles.

### *Motherhood in Advertisements*

Publicity helped to fashion modern and scientific motherhood into an extensive subject with a broad range of issues to which a woman should pay attention if she did not want to feel guilty for failing in her mothering duties.

There were many details: such as the balancing of meals to give children the necessary amount of vitamins and proteins; the importance of preparing different dishes everyday to keep their appetite; she should be aware of the dangers of germs hidden everywhere – no matter how clean the house looked; she should care for the learning of 'real' hygiene, for the choice of the best mattress; the best food; and for the importance of an emotionally healthy environment.

More than anybody else she should also be responsible for the building up of the new family relationships. An 'agony column' suggested the organisation of picnics by the mother, so that their children might realise that "Daddy could be a good mate."<sup>85</sup> In a series of advertisements, a mother observes the good humoured father playing with their children. The headline says : "All the family is happy" (some because they are having a good time; the



**All the family is happy**

<sup>85</sup> Maria Tereza. 'Da Mulher Para a Mulher', *O Cruzeiro* : 83, 24 /10/1953.

mother because she gave them 'milk of magnesia' and enjoys herself by observing their resultant happiness.<sup>86</sup>

Synchronised with the discourse of specialists, the advertisements showed the consequences of the 'good seeds sown in childhood.' In relation to an annoyed boy in front of the mother, *Kolynos* advertisement stated: "tomorrow he will be grateful...for having started *Kolynos* today". And the altercentered mother "will be glad from the conviction that he has stronger, whiter, healthier teeth."<sup>87</sup> It is a mother's duty to care for it giving him a balanced food with vitamins. With proper nutrition a mother would be able to proudly announce: "These are my children! and when people appreciate their fitness I explain that the secret is contained in a tin of *Toddy* that I always have near at hand."<sup>88</sup> In another advertisement for chocolate drink, a worried mother looks at her older son studying late in the



All the family is happy

night. The advertisement calls her attention: "Madam [the headline is in capital letters and goes on in its observations] : "In spite of the precious knowledge he is acquiring for the future, he is also spending too much energy... " [The threat is implicit: "and harassing his future health."]

Advertisements for mattresses remind the mother of the importance of choosing a good trade mark for the formation of bones and good posture of her children.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>86</sup> *Cinelândia* 7 (128):16. March 1958; *Cinelândia* 6 (130):18. April. 1958.

<sup>87</sup> *Cinelândia* 7 (128):63 March 1958.

<sup>88</sup> *Cinelândia* 4 (55) February 1955.

<sup>89</sup> *Cinelândia* 2 (16):11 July 1953.

In this advertisement, the mother is giving a glass of milk to her son – who is still studying, late in the night. It links the two – the glass of milk and the spring mattress appealing to her motherly feelings

Um copo de leite...

...e um colchão de molas **DIVINO**

É no silêncio da noite que a mãe percebe que o filho precisa de um copo de leite e de um colchão de molas DIVINO. É a hora de cuidar dele, de protegê-lo com os cuidados que ele precisa.

No entanto, não se esqueça: cuidar não é apenas dar um copo de leite e um colchão de molas DIVINO. É também cuidar da saúde dele, da sua saúde.

Porque cuidar é um ato de amor. E o amor é a melhor medicina.

É assim que a mãe cuida do filho. E assim que a mãe cuida de si mesma. Porque cuidar é um ato de amor. E o amor é a melhor medicina.

É assim que a mãe cuida do filho. E assim que a mãe cuida de si mesma. Porque cuidar é um ato de amor. E o amor é a melhor medicina.

A Glass of Milk and the Divino Spring Mattress: "Who else but you would remember the need of these small cares. He goes later to bed and wakes early in the morning. If you don't protect him with your cares, who else would?"<sup>90</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Cinelândia 2 (23):7 October 1953.

Tenho pena  
de tirá-lo  
da cama...



...agora que o seu colchão é **DIVINO**

um modelo PROMEX

Sua mãe é bem verdade! E você, igual a todas as mães, sabe como é triste levar as crianças saltarem da cama, quando elas ainda estão envoltas por laços das cobertas, tranquilamente adormecidas sobre aquele macio e confortável Colchão de Molas Divino!

Construído de entre as mais vigorosas praxinas anatômicas, os Colchões de Molas Divino oferecem para o corpo das crianças aquela sustentação uniforme, tão aconselhada pelos médicos — e que é tão necessária ao desenvolvimento sadio do corpo!

Escolher-se não, que tanto cuida do saúde de seus filhos: um colchão de molas de boa qualidade é muito importante na formação física e na parte normal das crianças!

The mother observes him sleeping, thinking : "I'm so sad when it's time to call him off the bed."<sup>91</sup>

<sup>91</sup> - Cinelândia, 2(16):11, July 1953.

The illustration of this advertisement<sup>93</sup> shows the schooling of the daughter in the altercentred subject role. Sitting in the floor beside a dog, she is exchanging her father's shoes for slippers. The man in a comfortable armchair caresses his daughter's chin in the same way he would tap the dog's head. Standing up, the wife/mother supervises the scene.



*“His rest must be put above everything else<sup>92</sup> No one but you knows what sleep represents to your husband. He works all day long and his rest at night must be considered very important.”*

The husband was also invested with all the privileges because of his role of breadwinner.<sup>94</sup>

<sup>92</sup> (Literally, it must be considered as sacred - *o sono dele é sagrado*) *Cinelândia* 2 (13):19, May, 1953.

<sup>93</sup> *Cinelândia*, 2 (13) 19, May 1953

<sup>94</sup> Among the poorer working class this idea is also responsible for an unequal division of food among the members of family. The major part should go for the working men in the family. For them are also reserved the considered stronger food, and meat, if there was any.

In this illustration the grandmother observes her grandchildren disputing the privilege of sleeping with the grandmother. She is cheering up the granddaughter who is crying whilst the grandson impetuously onto climbs the bed. It seems obvious that the girl has lost the dispute.<sup>95</sup>



*"Everybody wants to to sleep with grandma... now that she has the new spring mattress."*

<sup>95</sup> *Cinelândia*, 2 (21):5; September 1953



This advertisement considers a wife's endless work. It pictures a tired woman going upstairs with a pile of folded clothes in her hands. It is implicit that she was doing late ironing. There is a kind of complicity, as her inner feelings about her burden are shared by the advertisement:

*When the house is silent and everybody is already sleeping, it is the time for you to measure your own tiredness! And when you the last to go to bed nothing is better than laying your exhausted body on a spring mattress<sup>96</sup>*



The headline says: "You, the last person going to bed, also deserve a spring mattress..."

As the figures are always the same, we are led to imagine them as scenes from the same family. In one, the woman agreed that "her husband's rest is of paramount importance;" in another she takes a glass of milk for her son; in the following she observes him sleeping, and she is sorry for having to wake him up.<sup>97</sup> It is interesting to compare these scenes to what happened with the female part of the family.

<sup>96</sup> Cinelândia

<sup>97</sup> See them on previous pages.

To the mother, who is the last person to sleep every night because of (ironing, bringing milk), the advertisement stressed how good it is to have a new mattress. No doubt she has one because she shares it with her husband. But the daughter, who will not divide the bed with anyone (not even the grandmother's), just appears in the advertisements as a kind of supernumerary - either crying or lovingly giving her father his slippers. We can deduce that she is the only one in the family not to sleep on the new spring mattress.



To illustrate the simplicity of managing an electric polisher, nothing is better than a young girl doing it.<sup>98</sup>

Thus there were different ways of



The advertisement of a cleaning device commands: Follow this example!

representing sons and daughters in advertisements. Boys are pictured either studying or playing robustly outside the home. Sick children, in general are represented as girls — the 'weak' sex — being looked after by the mother. Girls are also shown reproducing the role of housewife, being pictured next to something connected to housework.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>98</sup> O Cruzeiro : 52, 7/2, 1953.

<sup>99</sup> It is not necessary to discuss here the issue of the reproduction of the woman's role, since it has already been exhaustively analysed.

Another aspect of motherly care arose from the uses of germ theory. At that time the dangers of insects, dust, had already been popularised. However, advertisements used this knowledge to instil fear and guilt in women, with the aim of selling their product. Whilst in the 1940s, the advertisement for Lifebuoy soap in Brazil stressed how good it was to get rid of body odour<sup>101</sup> in the 1950s it warned : "The danger is everywhere." Its advertisements showed boys gladly jumping, playing with marbles unconcerned with germs and microbes in



This advertisement blames the mother : *"You've joked when she slightly cut her finger...Now an infection is putting her life in danger."*<sup>100</sup>

the filthy soil. The advertisement flatters the mothers : "An innocent game...But YOU know that there is danger for their health in dust, in soil, everywhere...."<sup>102</sup> A mother could not rest, not even when their children seemed to be safely asleep at home. "Your children's health is in danger. Flies carry thousands of microbes."<sup>103</sup>

Mothers were also pictured as infused with all the knowledge of the world, in children eyes "Mum said that anti-enzymatic action is..." "Mum never forgets that her children must take some cookies to school, besides books and copybooks."<sup>104</sup> In a way they seem to reproduce the expectations of society which transformed her in an 'octopus mother', the one who must be able to deal simultaneously with several roles and tasks. Thus, the 1950s witnessed the birth of the super-mother invested with the duty of proficiently looking after the

minutest aspects of her offspring's life. More commonly, this super-mother was transformed into the guilty mother incapable of fulfilling the social expectations of her role.

<sup>100</sup> O *Cruzeiro*, 1/1/ 1954.

<sup>101</sup> An advertisement shows a smiling young lady taking her bath and saying: "No C.C. (cheiro de corpo =BO) I use Lifebuoy" O *Cruzeiro*: 27, 26 4/ 1947

<sup>102</sup> O *Cruzeiro*: 61, 11/2/ 1950.

<sup>103</sup> The advertisement shows an enormous fly almost attacking a peaceful sleeping child girl (again a girl is chosen to represent helplessness, weakness) O *Cruzeiro* : 50, 22/3/ 1947.

<sup>104</sup> Kolynos O *Cruzeiro* : AE2, 12/3/ 1955; Marmelada Peixe, O *Cruzeiro*, undercover; Biscoitos Aymoré, O *Cruzeiro* : 69, 31/1/ 1953; *ibid.*; O *Cruzeiro* : 47, 14/3/ 1953.

## *Your Majesty. The Child*

Children gradually were placed at the centre of the family.<sup>105</sup> Mothers should be solicitous with their feeding and sleeping habits. Moreover, specialists had already discovered the importance of maternal love for the well-being of children. However, it also meant more pressures over mothers, and important adjustments in family.

*Being a constant reassuring presence, considering one's child every need, creating a stimulating environment exactly suited to its current developmental stage – all these take up a great deal of time. Only with two children and a modernised home can the demands of modern child-care be comfortably met.*<sup>106</sup>

This was not the Brazilian case. There women could devote more time to their children, because they still could count on domestic help. However, advertisements for domestic appliances would transfer to Brazil a situation that did not seem to be their reality. In an

advertisement a little girl proudly announces: "Now, that WE have an Arno floor polisher, Mum has a lot of spare time to play with me."<sup>107</sup>

**"It's this baby who rules [the house, the family]."**

<sup>105</sup> Talco Ross. *O Cruzeiro*, 26 (51): 19, 2/10/54.

<sup>106</sup> HARDYMENT, 1984: 227. For the author "Freud could not have been allowed free rein in the 1950s if domestic appliance technology had been less sophisticated."

<sup>107</sup> *O Cruzeiro* 25 (20):67, 2/2/1953.

Este chão é um espelho!

Mamãe usa a


**Enceradeira elétrica**

**ARNO** Super

com espalhador de cerdas ultra-velocidade

A Enceradeira Elétrica ARNO Super raspa, esfrega e lustra, sem tranco de madeira. Com uma velocidade de movimento positiva com sucesso, tem muita maior superfície de polimento. Desce e sobe rapidamente e eficientemente. Esfrega até aos cantos, brilhando como um espelho, com o uso da Enceradeira Elétrica ARNO Super.

Ex. M. 1086 - 1.1. 1958



**ARNO S. A.**  
Indústria e Comércio

Rua do  
Assando do Café, 148 - São Paulo  
São Paulo - Est. de São Paulo

Loja ARNO:  
Com. 300 - Rua - Companhia  
Santos - São Paulo

ARNO S. A. - INDÚSTRIA E COMÉRCIO - SÃO PAULO - BRASIL

"The floor looks like a mirror! Mother has an Arno polisher..."

Exigencies over child care were also paramount in Brazil. Motherhood was the ultimate vocation for a woman – at the same time the most 'natural' and 'sublime' of all. Through it she shared animal maternal instinct with Mary's divine motherhood. It legitimated sexual life, for the authors of domestic manuals, who thoroughly agreed that maternal love not only was greater<sup>108</sup> but should be put before the love for the husband. This environment was caught for a trade mark of domestic appliances whose advertisements were illustrated with babies and toddlers. Rather than the exigent husband whose demands over domestic higher standards must be met, children have the last word to say about the fulfilment of their needs. An authoritarian baby demanded: "I want my soup prepared in the *Arno* blender." And he goes to the key point: "All children take with more appetite, and profit fruit juices, soups, 'vitamin-meals' ('*vitamina-refeições* [sic])' made at once with the *Arno* blender."<sup>109</sup> A smiling baby announces as if he were the master of the house:

*I am very pleased. Mum has Arno domestic appliances. That means she has more spare time. I am pleased with the standards of cooking and cleaning: home is spotless; dishes made in the blender are delicious, and using the pressure cooker is much more economical.*

<sup>108</sup> It is worth remembering that, in the words of the Father of the Church, the possibility of giving more virgins to God was the only excuse for sexual life. See chapter 2.

<sup>109</sup> The use of blenders popularised a kind of thick drink of fruits blended with milk or orange juice, meaningfully called '*vitamina*'. They are part of the compulsory diet of children, and are very popular as 'snacks' among adults. Probably this is the 'vitamin-meal' referred to in the advertisement. *O Cruzeiro* 25 (24):104, 7/3/ 1953.

It becomes clear that home was a feminine realm constituted under the male gaze. Advertisements target woman but man remained as an implicit reference: he is the ultimate reason for her to buy cosmetics and toiletries, to ask for domestic goods, for the new electric appliances or to introduce new products in family meals. The Brazilian family followed the traditional model with gender and age roles well defined: the [single] male role is illustrated in a set of embroidery patterns named



The headline judiciously indicate that “he” is right: one must have the nest done before the hen lay the eggs. That is man must buy or furnish the house before settling a family.’

time in appropriate male pastime.

News was spread about man sharing domestic tasks in American families, which was usually regarded as non-sense, something unthinkable for Brazilian standards. In 1952, the lyrics of a popular music<sup>112</sup> bemoaned against that “new fashion,” exhorting a man to put down the kitchen spoon and stay in the living room: “Man must not be in the kitchen which is



The headline states : the rooster is right, the one who sows also reaps

‘The Rooster is Right’<sup>110</sup> It starts with the rooster playing the trumpet to announce a new day<sup>111</sup>. This can be interpreted that ‘he’ is doing his job, fulfilling ‘his’ duty.

. This series replicated what was expected from a man’s behaviour - to work hard in order to provide the family, having the right to keep a good



And the last one shows him at leisure drinking in a bar at the seaside

<sup>110</sup> ‘O Galo Está com a Razão,’ *O Jornal das Moças* from 2/03 to 6/04/1950.

<sup>111</sup> ‘O Galo está com a razão: assim toca seu clarin anunciando na segunda feira a alvorada de uma nova semana.’

<sup>112</sup> *Baião de Dois*, Humberto Teixeira e Luiz Gonzaga.

which is woman's exclusive place." Nonetheless at the end of the decade, not only man could be seen pushing baby prams in Copacabana,<sup>113</sup> as he could be pictured on apron taking care of a baby as in this advertisement.

## Conclusion

In the 1950s the cult of domesticity had its revival. The ideological similarity between that decade and the turn of the nineteenth century are striking. The home was again put at the centre of life, either as the place where the threatened traditional virtues could be safeguarded, or as the arena for the display of modern domestic appliances.

Family scenes in advertisements stressed harmony and cohesion, "while it is difficult to explain [...] how this notion is conveyed, the reader felt assured that all the children were present." That is "the family is always represented as unified and intact."<sup>114</sup> And more, "family circle clichés reconciled newer notions of family democracy with more traditional images of family governance."<sup>115</sup> Although the image of the patriarch was substituted by the 'father-good-fellow', there is no doubt about his everlasting dominant role. Faith in Science and the 'psychologisation' of family put children at the centre of family's concern and added new responsibilities to the mother's role.

The modern housewife was the other side of the seductive object – consuming the new goods of the industrialised society. Domestic goods and its publicity were introduced into a society which still kept traditional social features. The relationship between family and its servants well illustrate this point. Indeed the goods destined to lessen the burden of domestic chores seldom reached the hands of the ones who effectively were in charge of them. Many goods were bought and remained unused just to display familial adhesion to modernity.



<sup>113</sup> See Chapter 1. Advertisement on the right, *Querida* 79, September 1957.

<sup>114</sup> MARCHAND, 1985: 250.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*: 251. Although the author is analysing advertising in North America in the 1920s and 1930s, some of his arguments can be applied to the Brazilian situation. It is worth to remind that major American advertising companies were responsible for the publicity of the new domestic goods (of foreign trade marks as well) in Brazil.

## Chapter 10

### *Fashioning The Domestic Domain:*

#### *Work, Space and Time in the Modern Home*

#### *The Modern Home*

A good account of the middle-class domestic domain and its life style is provided by advertisements and issues about house decoration published in the modern magazines in the 1950s and indirectly in religious manuals. The supposed reader of the religious manuals lived in an extended household, with “parents and children, servants, probably grandparents; sometimes also an elder relative or friends who have extended their stay , and guest”<sup>1</sup> – a situation which would soon be transformed due to the changes in housing and consequently in the structure of families – from extended to nuclear.

According to Carlos A.C. Lemos,<sup>2</sup> until the end of the Second World War, the reflection of domestic life style in domestic architecture had not undergone substantial changes. In a broad view, urban houses copied the solutions of the rural architecture of the farm houses, chiefly in relation to the ‘service part’ of the house: kitchen, garden, orchard, the woodstore for the stove, ‘the dirty kitchen’– as they called the place for the large cooker made of brick where they transformed fruits into preserves and sweets, where they ‘did the pork’ – melting the lard, preserving the meat, making the sausages and black puddings – and cooked the food which required much preparation. In the yard there was also the henhouse, the half-spherical brick oven to bake bread, cookies and large pieces of meat; the place for the laundering of personal clothes, which included a space to heat the steeped whites in the sun. The household clothes would be washed outside the home, at the house of a hired laundress.

However, in the 1950s middle- to lower-class houses start to include the *copa* (pantry),<sup>3</sup> copied from the upper-class stately houses, which was an intermediary place between the social and service areas, where “the waiter washed the cutlery, the German

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<sup>1</sup> D’ AZEVEDO, 194:57

<sup>2</sup> LEMOS, 19: Chapter 7.

<sup>3</sup> Originally it was a broad passage room where there was a large cupboard to keep “the daily dish ware, the tins of cookies, the teapots, medicines used at the time, and fruits for ripening.” Ibid.:136.



nurse did the baby's food, the lady of the house made fashionable desserts and, chiefly, the family could be isolated from the servants."<sup>4</sup> In the middle-class houses the pantry became the place for everyday meals, and, as Carlos Lemos pointed out, "where the family eats, the family stays."

*There was the place for the large Radio, for children to do their homework, for the master of the house to read the newspaper, the housewife to mend clothes, embroider or knit whilst listening to soap operas and the popular musical programs."*

Thus, the 'copa' became the room "where the family superimposed the functions of the living- and service rooms, where leisure and domestic work were placed together."<sup>5</sup>

In the large cities, the problem of housing for the middle classes started to increase. Middle-class families had to opt between living in small cottages in distant suburbs, far from their work places, or the formerly-rejected flats in central areas. This option became each time an increasingly common solution, being also regarded as a sign of modernity for the radical changes in the life style that it implied. Religious authors considered them as factors in the desegregation of the family, contributing to the increase of claims for the institution of divorce law.<sup>6</sup>

The middle classes fixed the patterns for the standard layout of the flats, whose buildings copied the layout of the upper-class stately houses: the main entrance like the hall of mansions should have marble floor, high ceilings with crystal chandeliers, wainscoting, decorative glass in the doors and windows. The other plain entrance and a separate lift were destined for the servants, and suppliers of domestic goods.<sup>7</sup>

Likewise flats had two entrances, and kept the former pattern of service places: kitchen, a separate room for doing the laundry, drying clothes, and storing goods, with a tiny room with a WC, for the servant, still living with the family. The social areas maintained the total isolation for sleeping and bathing rooms and the living and dining room. Brazilian architects had to abandon the European model which they favoured and adapt the layout of middle-class cottages for the Brazilian flats.<sup>8</sup> They had large rooms and corridors (regarded by European architects as a waste of space) considered indispensable for circulation, but chiefly to maintain the isolation between family and servants. However, in spite of the larger size of the rooms, some adaptations had to be made, introducing the innovations of

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.:154.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.:155.

<sup>6</sup> The Church had successfully campaigned against the institution of the divorce law, mobilising the public opinion to refuse their votes to the politicians pro-divorce. Divorce was only instituted in Brazil in 1977, through a juridical artifice instituted by the military dictatorship – for different purposes – which allowed changes in the Constitution without having the former number of necessary votes in the Parliament.

<sup>7</sup> It is important to note that this is still the pattern of buildings, and attempts to ban the separate lift for servants have not succeed yet. Nonetheless efforts to make it illegal have been made,(at the moment there is a project in the Congress, presented by the Senator Benedita da Silva ).

<sup>8</sup> It is important to note that in Europe they were destined to the lower classes and had the superimposition of functions in the same room as a main characteristic.

'convertible' pieces of furniture such as sofa-beds, extendible tables, bunkbeds, built-in wardrobes, consumed at the time as modern novelties.

A good account of domestic decoration of the time is provided by the weekly photograph reports published by the *Revista do Rádio*, "This is my home." Each week a Rádio star – some very famous, others not so much – showed in detail their houses. This assists comparison of the several possibilities of middle-class housing in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.

The majority of these stars had humble origins which are revealed in their home environment. For several reasons, some of them continued to live in suburban houses,<sup>9</sup> which certainly did not differ from their neighbours – except by the mandatory electric appliances not yet so widespread among the majority of the population. The furniture was mass-produced and bought in suites – sometimes of 11 or even 13 pieces – in heavy and dark traditional styles, the favourites being the Chippendale, followed by the Rustic and Mexican, making the rooms look overcrowded. They favoured small china decorations on the **cupboard**, the dining table covered by a large, embroidered table-cloth, with a large glass fruit bowl on top flanked by two candlesticks, plants as an internal decoration were not yet very common. Collections of dolls on a shelf for feminine rooms and collections of pennants of clubs, of American Universities on the wall for masculine rooms were fashionable decorations, whereas one or two dolls decorating the couple's double bed was also popular.

The more famous artists lived in flats in the Southern area of Rio – chiefly in Copacabana. For the majority but the most famous ones, their home decoration did not differ much from these suburban houses. The following examples display two different style of decoration – traditional and modern – in flats of two prestigious artists.

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<sup>9</sup> A report explained why several famous stars still lived in the suburbs: 'Gente do Rádio Foge de Copacabana .' Some stayed because they still lived with parents or relatives in the same place where they had lived since childhood, for the plain fact that the majority of Rádio stars were far from earning much money, as the public was led to believe; others alleged an attachment to the suburban life-style – where they had gardens, back yards henhouses, dogs, cats and birds. Several still did not have a car, and were photographed taking the bus. *Revista do Rádio*, 156 :4-7, 9/9/1952.



— Éis um detalhe da sala de estar, onde podem observar o aparelho de televisão Emerson de 18 polegadas e em tonsidade marrom. O sofá é de jacarandá, com forração em grená. Além, o sofá foi presente do General Figueira Machado, amigo de nossa família. (Os móveis são em estilo imperial)

— Aqui é o "hall" de entrada. Vejam o "console" de ferro batido, em preto e apliques dourados. O espelho é de cristal, dourado e em estilo moderno. Observem ainda, a estante em forma de cantoneiras, com Heras do Paulo.

# MINHA CASA É ASSIM

APRESENTADA  
POR

**HELOISA**

**HELENA**

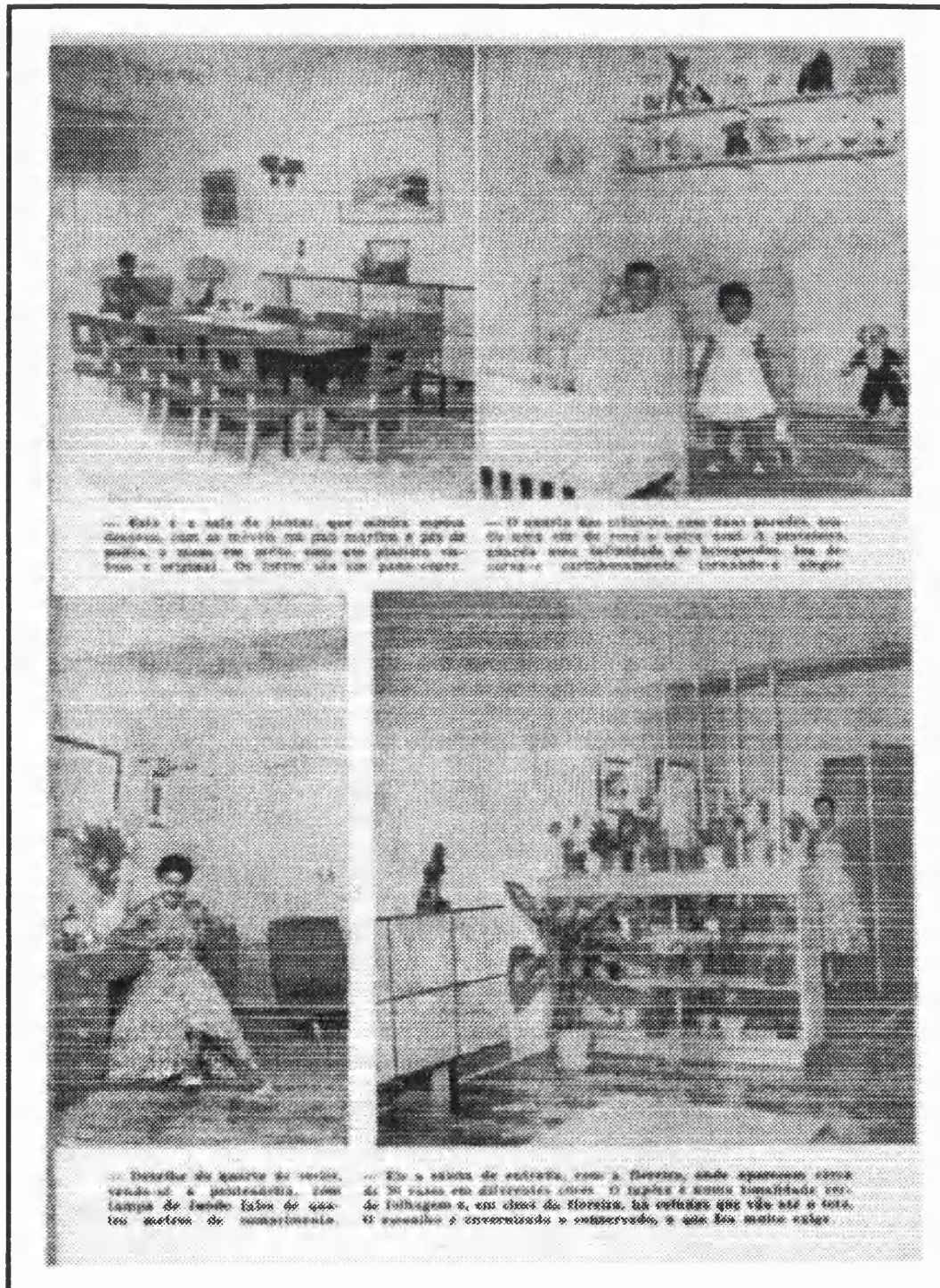
— Éis o edifício onde reside (eu e minha família). Está localizada no Flamengo, tem 3 salas, 1 quarto, dependências de empregada, cozinha, copa e banheiro. O apartamento está no 2.º andar e é bem arejado e confortável.



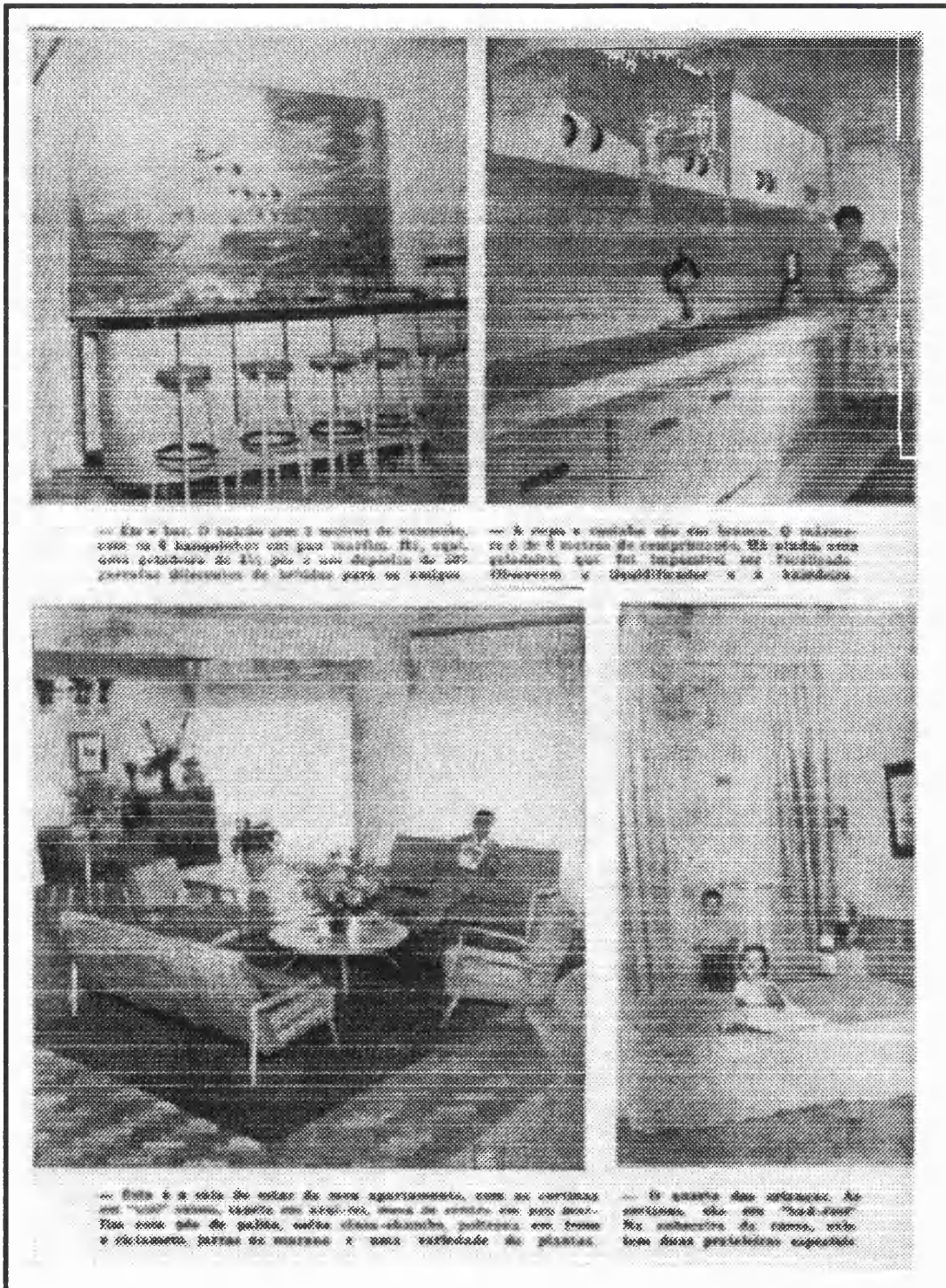
10

<sup>10</sup> Seldom had their homes been professionally decorated, or the furniture specially designed. The illustration shows a more sophisticated decoration since it mix antiques (silver in the cupboard, in the last photo of the next page, and the armchair in the first). 'Minha Casa é Assim apresentada por Heloisa Helena.' *Revista do Rádio* (360) 4/08/1956.

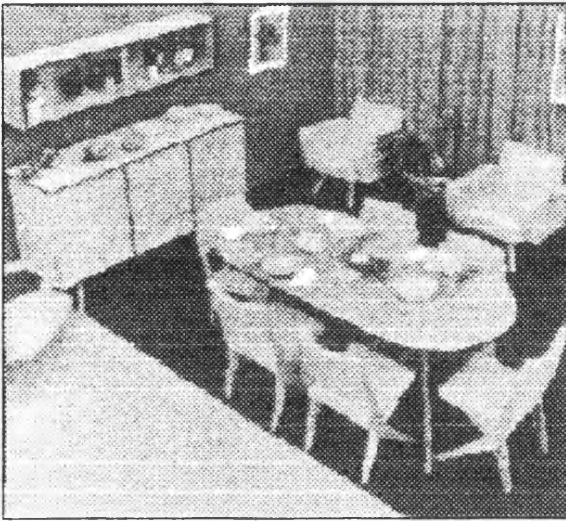
In this case, as the artist is a man, his wife is the constant reference.<sup>12</sup> For instance, “Isa always demands a well-polished floor. “or Īsa decorated the children’s room with lots of toys.” Whilst he is photographed sitting in the living room, she introduces the kitchen, exemplifying the fact that in a house there are spaces more feminine/masculine than others.



<sup>12</sup> A Modern Flat. 'Minha Casa é Assim...' [apresentada por Manuel Barcelos], *Revista do Radio*, (346):30-33.



The description of Manuel Barcelos' living room was: "The curtains are made of Swiss voil, the tapestry is royal-blue, the sofa is lead-grey, one of the armchairs is 'fraise' and the other, cyclamen." It is important to note the powerful use of foreign material and its names to stress sophistication and social distance. Other signs of modernity were the 'American Kitchen,' and the bar.



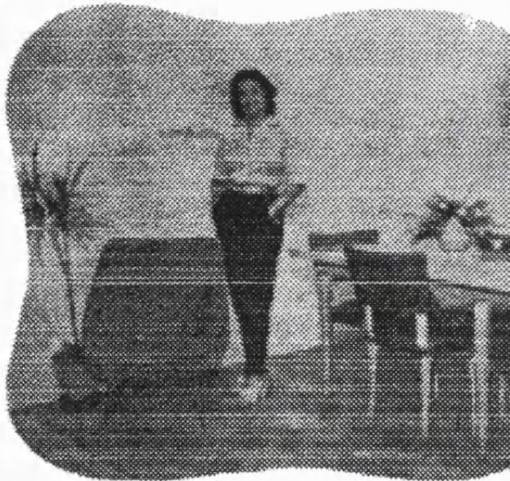
**"Toothpick Legs: the modern detail..."**

moulded contours of contemporary furniture frames, and on the way in which structural details were revealed. Suspension, jointing and



**"It is an abstract mirror [sic]",** <sup>13</sup>

Notwithstanding, the so-called 'modern' style was becoming increasingly common:<sup>14</sup> Furniture was light, made in pale timber with thin splayed legs and irregular curved shapes.<sup>15</sup> The soft furnishings could be of various bright colours instead of the previously mandatory one-colour-one-pattern upholstery.<sup>16</sup> In general, "the influence of modern sculptors, painters and architects [could be noted] on the



**To match the style the photo was also irregularly shaped**

balance were emphasised for visual appeal.<sup>17</sup> This relationship elicited such comments as those: "a chair in a curious style", "a flying-dish lamp," and, in general this new style was qualified as "clean and functional", "modern and practical, "modern and bold," or "modern and revolutionary."<sup>18</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *Revista do Rádio*, (342), 31/3/1956.

<sup>14</sup> In Brazil called toothpick legs. "Pé Palito, o detalhe moderno dos Móveis Z" in *Nosso Século*: 142.

<sup>15</sup> *Revista do Rádio* 342:20, 31/03/1956.

<sup>16</sup> See the description of Manuel Barcelos' living room on the previous page.

<sup>17</sup> MAC DONALD & PORTER, [ no number of pages.]

<sup>18</sup> *Revista do Rádio*, respectively, (313), 11/11/1955, (326) 12/12/1955; (260), 4/9/ 1954; (313) 19/11/ 1955, (220), 28/11/ 1953.



Special emphasis was put on domestic appliances, introduced with its commercial specifications: "This is my Zenith 20" TV set," "My GE 11ft fridge;" or more explicitly : "My Climax Washing Machine - the best friend of my home."<sup>19</sup> The presentation of domestic appliances are not restricted to this kind of report. Since in general, the reports also presented a domestic environment, photographs of the artists near the TV set or near the domestic bar were constants in the *Revista do Rádio*.

On the one hand, to link artists with these appliances connoted affluence and modernity. A good example is a photograph of the most popular Rádio singer - Emilinha Borba near an air-conditioner. Its subtitle explains that due to the singer's artistic compromises, she cannot spend her holidays in a mountain resort. However, it does not matter since " the mountain air - 'bottled' in

her domestic 'conditionaire' (sic)- is now available in every place and at any time of the year."<sup>20</sup> Looking at these reports, it remains open to doubt whether they were just product merchandising or not. It is hard to believe that these reports already masked publicity - a common practice decades later. However, it is also possible that the emphasis on such details was a way of marking their concreteness, making them real for the vicarious consumption of the readers. Perhaps this is also



<sup>19</sup> *Revista do Rádio*.

<sup>20</sup> *Revista do Rádio* (502):14, 2/5/1959.

the explanation for comments such as “ this is my mahogany table - a very expensive wood.”<sup>22</sup> These artists also proudly published the use at their homes of new materials such as plastic, assembled wood, materials which would be later labelled either as fake, cheap, or of bad-taste.



Emilinha Borba was photographed in bathrobe and plastic cap opening the plastic curtain to take a shower - a kind of photograph which no one later would dare to display<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Illustration on the right. Emilinha Depois do Casamento' (Emilinha after marriage). *Revista do Rádio* (368): 46-49, 9/9/1956. She was the most popular radio singer of the 1950s.

<sup>22</sup> 'Esta É a Minha Casa' presented by Emilinha Borba. *Revista do Rádio* (164): 24, 28/10/ 1952.



On the other hand, such homes epitomised modern domestic happiness best achieved with the help of electric appliances. As in Victorian times, home was again the place of love and happiness.



*"This is One of the Happiest Men in São Paulo." "All the money he earns is spent at home to give more comfort to his family [...] he and his wife arranged their house so as to have all the advantages of modern comfort plus the smallest details which transform a house into true home."*<sup>23</sup>

Stereotyped gender roles in the scenes are telling: the wife is standing up, probably serving the breakfast to him; in another photograph she is sewing whilst he reads the newspaper, both aptly illustrate the 'visual familial clichés' described by Marchand.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> *Revista do Rádio* (281), 29/1/ 1955.

<sup>24</sup> MARCHAND, 1983. See also chapter 9 of this thesis.

The decoration of this house follows a less sophisticated pattern – a suburban middle-class house, notwithstanding the artist being declared one of the wealthiest at the time. The table on the dining room (or pantry?) covered with a large embroidered table cloth, the small figures and other decorations as a more crowded living room (inferior right corner) are associated with a lower-class taste. As Bourdieu pointed up

*the effect of mode of acquisition is most marked in the ordinary choices of everyday existence, such as furniture, clothing or cooking which are particularly revealing of deep-rooted and long-standing dispositions because lying outside the scope of educational system, they have to be confronted by naked taste, without any explicit prescription or proscription.*<sup>25</sup>



<sup>25</sup> BOURDIEU, 1979:77.

A report about the death of an artist on Christmas Eve illustrates a rupture between text and its illustrative photographs.<sup>26</sup> Whilst the first reports the circumstance, the photograph shows his house just like any other report. As one could anticipate, he is pictured kissing his wife and playing with the baby daughter. However, the images which strike the reader are the others: he is pictured near the bar,<sup>27</sup> shaving on the bathroom, in front of his open wardrobe and with the telephone.



José Hübner numa recente fotografia com sua filhazinha Maria Regina, de três meses.

A casa de José Hübner e Maria Amália sempre foi um verdadeiro lar. Ele e sua esposa folgavam, e com um encanto novo depois que a orgulhosa lhes trouxera uma linda garotinha.

**S. PAULO  
PERDEU  
UM DOS  
SEUS  
IDOLOS**

Tive a morte profunda e silenciosa repentinamente e desaparecimento no dia de Natal, daquele que foi um dos maiores e mais queridos artistas de rádio e da televisão paulista: José Hübner. Comediante veterano no sítio da Record. Ele participou dos mais populares cartoons daquela emissora, recebendo inclusive prêmios de crítica bastante destacada aos melhores artistas da paulista.

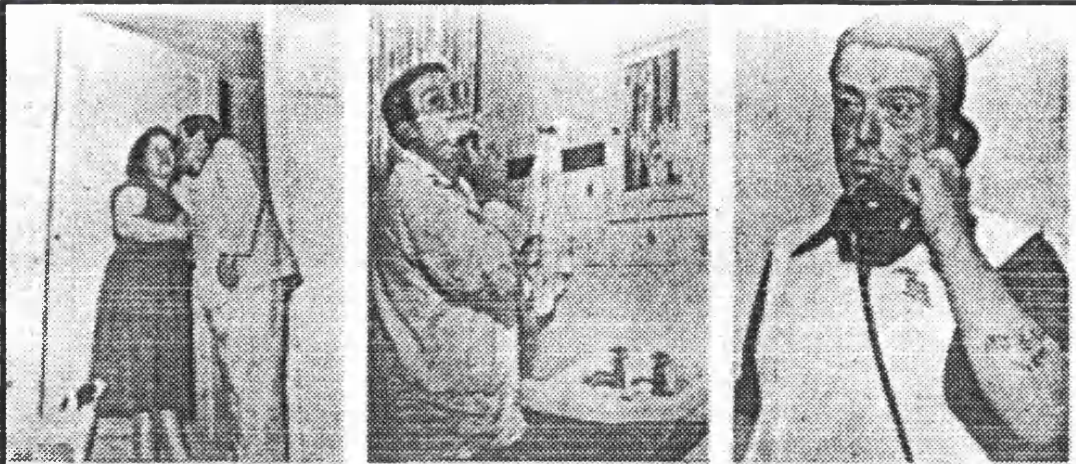
José Hübner estava na Rádio Record no dia de Natal, cerca das 22,30 horas, quando ocorreu um pequeno acidente de mão. Seu pequeno acidente o arrojou ao chão para o hospital. Ali, os médicos de serviço providenciaram uma imediata cirurgia. Entretanto José Hübner teve um segundo acidente e de nada valeram os remédios que lhe foram aplicados. Vítima de um estema pulmonar, faleceu instantes depois, no exato mo-

Ambedos os artistas, José e Maria, não perderam a oportunidade para uma alegre brincadeira.



<sup>26</sup> "São Paulo perdeu um dos seus ídolos", *Revista do Rádio* (280):20-21, 1/1/ 1955.

<sup>27</sup> See the enlarged detail on page 438.



Quando ele saiu não deixava de beijar a esposa querida, ins-cendo de sua vida.

José Rubens com dois de seus últimos retratos, dias antes do trágico desaparecimento. Seu nome figurava com destaque entre os dos mais queridos artistas do público paulista.

**JOSÉ  
RUBENS  
FALECEU  
NO DIA DE  
NATAL**

Ele a via com os olhos ge-niais em suas caréolas ar-tísticas. A crí-tica paulista laureou-se di-versas vezes.



mento em que as ouvintes pas-sadas se deliciavam com um programa de Record gravado, em que ele tomava parte!

O sepultamento foi realizado no dia seguinte, às 16 horas, no cemitério da Quarta Parada, diante da multidão de artistas e admiradores de José Rubens. Segundo informações de nossa reportagem local, repetiram-se, então, cenas em melhor esca-la, as cenas registradas no sepultamento de Francisco Alves.

José Rubens era casado com a atriz Maria Amélia há 12 anos. Em setembro a esposa lhe trouxera uma herdeira, Maria Regina, detendo os seus momentos de felicidade, trágica-mente interrompido com o drama acontecimento que enlutou o rádio brasileiro em plena noite de Natal.

Jose Rubens died on Christmas Eve.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> The caption on the first photo says: *He never forgot to kiss his dear wife, the inspiration of his life.* See chapter 8 of this thesis.



It is possible that these photographs were the most effective way of mourning him, marking the suddenness and unfairness of his early death (when he could enjoy the comfort of modern home). It is important to note that this kind of photo was linked to the new planned 'American kitchen.'

### *The 'American Kitchen'*

Two places possessed special signification in the artist's home: the bathroom – no more conventionally white-tiled, but green or blue – and the kitchen. As had happened in many countries the 'fitted kitchen' – in Brazil called the American kitchen – became the 'consumerist dream' of the 1950s housewife<sup>30</sup>.

*Kitchens in American films provoked in the women of my generation a painful envy. I dreamt of that easy, quick and clean way of cooking, which made wearing an apron superfluous! I imagined myself cooking, smartly dressed, neatly coifed and well manicured – as Green Garson, Jennifer Jones or Audrey Hepburn did. Afterwards I would set the table with tall candles to be lighted on the arrival of Robert Taylor, Clark Gable or Gregory Peck.*

*As I could not fulfil my dreams I contemptuously remarked – I bet that these female stars do not even know how to cook a real meal – rice, beans and steak with fries...All they know is how to heat convenience food. The contemptuous remark was the consolation for my unfulfilled dreams.<sup>31</sup>*



*"José Rubens's and Maria Amélia's house had always been a true home, where they lived happily." The fridge is arranged as in the advertisements.<sup>29</sup>*

<sup>29</sup> See the detail of the report on the right.

<sup>30</sup> See 'The American Dream' in MAC DONALD & PORTER, 1990.

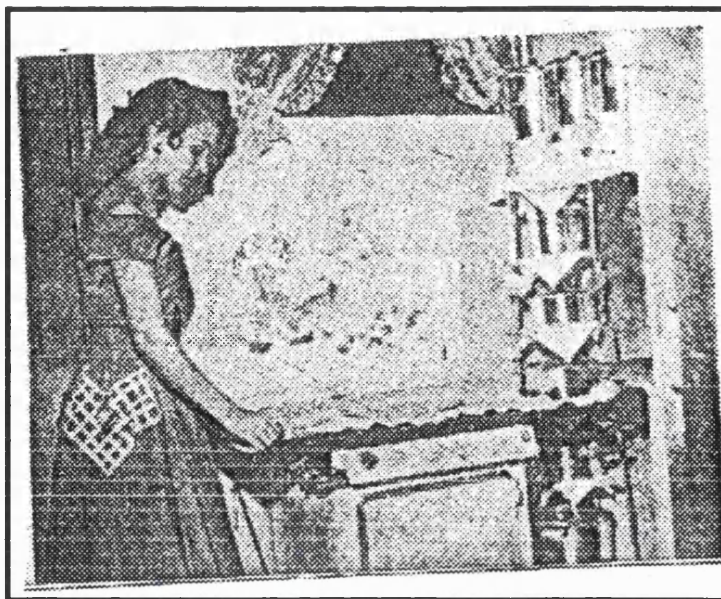
<sup>31</sup> LACERDA, 1990:27.



Some of the flats had these 'American kitchens' which represented a different conception of space. More commonly, kitchens in Brazil had a cupboard, a tier saucepans stand and shelves for storage tins, in addition to the cooker and the sink. These shelves were lined with embroidered towels, or paper laboriously cut to make a kind of doily.



Some 'American kitchens' in the Rádio stars' flats, still had corner shelves attached to the wall with towels and little china decorations, breaking with its clean, and aseptic appearance. In spite of the widespread use of gas cooker among these stars, some kitchens still had the traditional '*pano de fogão*' – a quite useless embroidered towel to be hung over the wood stove, to prevent the black smoke from dirtying the wall.<sup>32</sup>



<sup>32</sup> See the illustrations on this page.

These American kitchens introduced in Brazil the aesthetic of cleanliness, and the concept of planning and labour saving in the domestic landscape,<sup>33</sup> but the extent to which middle-class housewives adopted them in the 1950s is open to question. The well arranged kitchen for them still had to have those embroidered towels, and small decorations to testify to the housewife's care. This was far from the aseptic look that kitchen should have, to match the patterns of hygiene preached by the American home economists.<sup>34</sup>

In the same way, more than labour saving devices, the modern electric appliances were signs of status for many middle-class families. In the second half of the decade, these appliances started to be widespread among the lower-middle classes, and at the same time, the patterns for making covers for them became popular. Besides preventing dust, these covers had the prime purpose of

transforming the appliances into decorative objects. Covers transformed blenders or floor polishers into dolls, dressed as Dutch girls, bahianas, clowns, thus stressing the housewife's abilities and concern. It seems that there was a fear that these strange appliances could disfigure the home, making it look like a plant or a laboratory.<sup>35</sup> Adrian Forty points out that while the idea of home could vary culturally, "at any one time, and in any one place, there is likely to be a consensus about what a home should be like, what is right and proper there, and what is out of place."

Tudo conforme  
foi idealizado...

...e, agora, sua cozinha responde  
com o tanto de exigências do  
trabalho, de mais estritas regras de  
higiene, das modernas princípios de estética  
...sim, V. S. precisa de uma

cozinha  
planejada **SECURIT**

S. PAULO - R. 30 de Maio, 47 - tel. 23.087 e 812 - R. do México, 16 - tel. 72.441

TEENDERAL S.A. Caixa Postal, 3865 - São Paulo

Por favor, enviar em  
seu envelope  
com o endereço  
do nome completo:

NOME \_\_\_\_\_  
RUA \_\_\_\_\_  
Cidade \_\_\_\_\_

"Everything as planned..."

<sup>33</sup> For these features in American Society, see FORTY, 1986 : chapter 7. See also MATTHEWS, 1987; OGDEN, 1987.

<sup>34</sup> The headline says: 'Tudo como Planejado...' 'Seleções 24(140) :159.

<sup>35</sup> FORTY, *ibid.*:94.

Advertisements for American kitchens also introduced the themes of the so-called 'Time-Motion Movement' whose leading figure was the American Lillian Gilbert who continued the work done by her husband in this field. They preached the introduction of Taylorism into domestic chores. Lillian Gilbert's husband was probably best known among the Brazilian public through his biography *'Cheaper by the Dozen'* published by *Seleções* and filmed with Clifton Webb as the leading character.<sup>37</sup>

**economize  
seus passos...**

Uma doméstica precisa andar de cozinha de casa de quatorze metros por hora. Quanto mais tempo, mais e só para fazer das coisas mais necessárias racionalmente distribuídas! Seja prática! Seja moderna! Entenda seu lar e não se esqueça de comprar a Placard Securit, ADQUIRA DE UMA VEZ OU PEÇA POR PEÇA.

**- modernizando sua cozinha!**

**SECURIT**

**"Save your steps:" A housewife walks several kilometres each year just in her kitchen alone ! How many kilometres have you purposelessly walked just because your appliances are not rationally distributed. Be practical ! Be modern ! Decorate you home and save your efforts with an efficiently planned kitchen Securit - the kitchen of your dreams.<sup>36</sup>**

<sup>36</sup> O Cruzeiro :51, 5/5/51.

<sup>37</sup> Translated as *'Mais Barato às Duas'*. The film, *Cheaper by the Dozen* by Walter Lang (1950) was called in Brazil *'Papai Batuta'*. ROSEN lists it among the films made to exalt American family's life, in the 1950s.



The idea of applying Taylorism to domestic chores had been very much criticised. The model kitchen planned by Christine Frederick where housewives could make a cake in few minutes, was proved to be quite efficient just for making cakes: any other dish would need another kind of planning for it. This movement also failed because most of the work done at home is socially isolated, involves monitoring several activities at once,<sup>38</sup> and has many emotional burdens which are not subject to rationalisation or mechanisation. There are inherent limits on the degree to which technology may actually ease housework.<sup>39</sup>

Out of the ideological problems of limiting housework to its mechanical aspects, without discussing the gender division of roles, or the economical and political implications that are in its essence, the critics of the Time-Motion Movement point out other conceptual limitations. That is the confusion made between saving effort and saving time.<sup>40</sup> The limitations of the research on time-motion techniques comes from their not considering these as separate phenomena. Ease of housework is a complex cluster of both objective and subjective elements that includes reducing physical fatigue, increasing the pleasantness of performing tasks, adding variety as a means of stimulating interests, guarding against boredom, and enhancing feelings of self-worth. Thus, ease of housework and reduction of time spent on housework are not conceptually identical.<sup>41</sup> And the most important of all, household technologies are designed to support the home system and thereby to keep women economically marginal to the larger society. Contrary to what was believed it is even possible that these devices may contribute to increase dissatisfaction with housework. The traditional assumption of the pioneer home economists that easier work would necessarily increase the housewives' satisfaction with their role seems to be far from correct.

The impact of the use of domestic technology on changing the traditional division of gender roles was also far from being accomplished. As Graham Thomas and Christine Zmroczek pointed out

*rather than break down the traditional role-assignments modern household equipment seems to reinforce them by making easier for those who are stereotyped as doing particular tasks to do them without help from others.*<sup>42</sup>

Advertisements for domestic appliances helped to fix the idea that time is never enough in modern times. Making an analogy with cosmetics – these appliances create the

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<sup>38</sup> This simultaneity of tasks is the main limitation of time-budget analysis.

<sup>39</sup> BOSE, BEREANO AND MALLOY, 1984:64.

<sup>40</sup> Ruth Cowan uses the distinction: time saving and labor saving. COWAN, 1989.

<sup>41</sup> BOSE, BEREANO & MALLOY, *ibid.*. See MATHEWS, 1987;. BERCH, 1980, OGDEN, 1987.

<sup>42</sup> T. C.A. Thrall, 'The Conservative Use of Modern Household Technology' (*Technology and Culture* 23, 1982) quoted by THOMAS & ZMROCZEK, 1985:124.

problem that they claimed they aimed to solve.<sup>43</sup> It was particularly true for middle -class housewives who still counted on domestic servants to do housework.<sup>44</sup> Advertisements emphasised the saving of time in tasks which were not usually performed by the housewife. However, research about the impact of such technology on Brazilian middle-class housewives is still to be done. It is quite possible, that by not allowing the use by servants of such appliances, the lady of the house started to assume the performance of tasks that had previously been done by the servants.<sup>45</sup> The introduction of domestic technology increased the standards of these tasks, and furthermore enveloped them in an ideology of love. As Thomas and Zmroczek pointed out advertising fostered the increase of such expectations, and moreover

*[S]omehow a connection has been made between providing clean clothes and a woman's love for her children. Their shirts must be whiter than white or she is not a good mother.*<sup>46</sup>

The efficacy of such appeals in both ideological frames, that mother must excel beyond the humanly possible to lavish love on their offspring (and relatives), and that the woman's competence is also measured by the attention paid to the smallest details in the performance of domestic chores, helps us to understand how women became increasingly entrapped by the advertising discourse of modern domestic devices.

*An Allegory: 'Mme Aliá' —*

### *The She-Elephant*

'Mme Aliá'<sup>47</sup> is the name of an embroidery pattern for a set tea-towels. Mme. Aliá – the she-elephant – does her laundry on Monday, ironing on Tuesday, cleaning on Wednesday, sewing on Thursday; her shopping on Friday; she cooks fashionable dishes on



<sup>43</sup> See chapter 7 of this thesis.

<sup>44</sup> This does not mean to forgetting that management of home and other aspects involved in domestic work - kinship work, the management of social capital, the rearing of children are not time demanding as well.

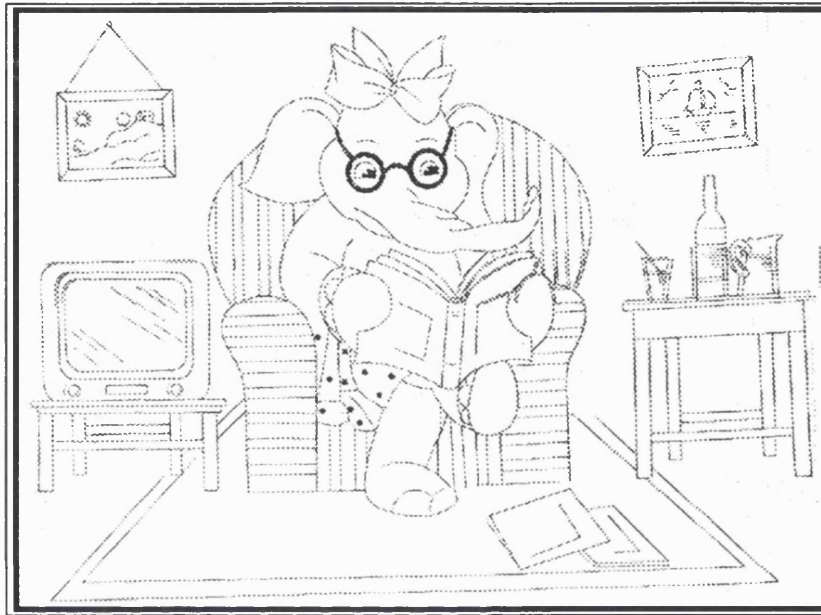
<sup>45</sup> See COWAN, 1989.

<sup>46</sup> THOMAS & ZMROCZEK, *ibid.*:121.

<sup>47</sup> *Aliá* is the formal correct feminine form of elephant in Portuguese, a very formal word.

Saturday and goes to Church – with a hat and umbrella – on Sunday. What gives the she-elephant series its peculiarities, are the modern domestic appliances displayed in it. Instead of the usual broom and duster of the other sets, the she-elephant uses an electrical floor polisher, her cooker is likewise an electric one.

This set also had a pattern for the 'stove towel' which shows the she-elephant at leisure in



her living room. *Mme Aliá* epitomises the modern housewife who has domestic appliances to ease her burden, and illustrates a woman up-to-date her time. The majority of the consumer public for these sets – chiefly for the 'stove towel' – did not have access to these goods in the 1950s. These patterns for embroidering kitchen-sets as they were known, constituted a kind of narrative<sup>48</sup> about housework, constituting an eloquent discourse about woman's perception of the her working time<sup>49</sup> – a time organised by groups of activities – such as house (cleaning and arranging); food (supplying and preparing) clothing (laundry and sewing) which synthesise household cares. These series show a form of ordering the housewife's time – a time that paradoxically had been defined as 'timeless'<sup>50</sup> for the endless doing and undoing of the same tasks, that makes it something that 'is never done,' justifying the housewife's perception of housework as routine, demanding, boring, consuming and invisible. Taking it as the theme for these patterns was an idealised way of

<sup>48</sup> Articulated as the fables – a linear narrative on a metaphorical language whose characters are humanised animals, living ideal situations with moral or pedagogical purposes.

<sup>49</sup> However, it is impossible to determine whether the designers of these patterns for the *Jornal das Moças* – which was its main source – were men or women. It was a woman named Eugen who made the few patterns published by the *Jornal Feminino*.

<sup>50</sup> MOTTA & MACHADO NETO, 1985. For the perception of time among Brazilian working-class women see also CALDEIRA, 1981. SARTI, 1983.

representing this work which is never done – just one task for each day, cooking only fashionable dishes – which could be a source of pleasure – and having a whole day for resting and leisure. It is as if by catching this time on a tea-towel one could make visible what is characterised by its invisibility.<sup>51</sup> Thus, it can be said that these patterns were part of the housewives' fantasy about their own life conditions.<sup>52</sup>

Paradoxically, and for different motives, these patterns also epitomised the constant male fantasy about housewifery: housework is not labour at all;<sup>53</sup> electric appliances do reduce domestic chores, and a well equipped house represents the fulfilment of any wife's dreams. In consequence, if these housewives still complain about the burden that housework represents, it is because they failed to identify correctly the source of their dissatisfaction.

## *Time and Modernity*

The relationship between the perception of time and capitalism has been already studied in detail elsewhere.<sup>54</sup> Authors such as E.P Thompson have demonstrated that the perception of time as equal to money accompanies industrial capitalism. Time started to be dichotomised between labour and non-labour and it conditioned the modern relationship we have with time, ideas of leisure, of time as commodity.

It is open to doubt whether persons – such as the majority of the 1950s housewives – who had not experienced that dichotomy would have an equally time saving ethos. Feminist authors<sup>55</sup> argue that time is a gendered experience, and that the analysis of Thompson and others is male biased. Housewives probably perceived time not as a

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<sup>51</sup> See BAUDRILLARD, 1973.

<sup>52</sup> Notwithstanding this, working-class housewives seem to be entrapped by the strict routine they fixed for their work. They obsessively organise the rhythm of daily life in its smallest details, fix an order to the tasks and rigidly distribute the time among them. CALDEIRA, 1981 ventures that it is their way to make a sense of this quotidian – that is why they do not know how to stay quiet, they are endlessly buzzing around, even if they have nothing to do. MARTIN, 1984, in a inspiring article considers housework as a ritual creation of order [which] confers a form of domestic power to woman.

<sup>53</sup> As Leonore Davidoff pointed out, in nineteenth century England, it was more truly credited to middle- and upper class women, because of their domestic helpers. They could be carried as completely unproductive members of the households because ideology refused to allow the costing of womanly love and service. DAVIDOFF, 1976:138. See also BRUSCHINI, 1983, LEONARDO, 1987. Other aspects of housewifery such as the kinship-job, their role in social boundaries maintenance; or in administering the social capital of family are not envisaged as 'work' even by housewives themselves, nor by the time-budget researchers.

<sup>54</sup> E.g., THOMPSON, 1967. For social representations of time see also LEACH, 1974. For this issue in Brazil, see, BARBOSA, 1984; CALDEIRA 1981.

<sup>55</sup> See SEYMOUR, 1992.

linearity (as in modern societies) rather as circles (like peasants do) due to permanent do/undo of domestic tasks.<sup>56</sup>

Therefore it could seem a paradox that advertisements of cosmetics and domestic goods emphasised so much the idea of saving time, when its public did not perceive time as a good:

- *A Pressure Pan saves 80% of fuel and 80% of your time*<sup>57</sup>
- *Why put such efforts in it ? Make mayonnaise in just one minute!*<sup>58</sup>.
- *Save labour on the kitchen and add beauty to your table: This beautiful and savoury meal was prepared, seasoned, baked and will be served on this Pyrex dish.*<sup>59</sup>
- *Give them their favourite meal: "Feijoada," home-made in just 5 minutes*<sup>60</sup>

The way to solve the paradox is by considering time as a household resource<sup>61</sup> perceived by the housewives as always in short supply after the increasing pressures put on housewifery and motherhood.<sup>62</sup> The idea that time is not enough for everything one has to do was a decisive sign of identification with the 'modern way of life.' The analysis of the material exchanged by the public of the Reader's Club of the *Jornal Feminino* shows this association between time and modernity, revealed in signs such as the increased popularity of the less time demanding one-course-meal for parties or Sunday lunch; new forms of embroidery stitches — quick and easy to do, to substitute the previous more elaborated ones.<sup>63</sup>

That historical process which resulted in the modern perception of time also paralleled the increased centralisation of modern society around the notion of the individual. Besides a time of God (as in medieval age) and a human time increasingly we started to have is a macro time which involves everybody and several individual times to be posed and disposed as one likes. And in a society which values youth, ageing started to be the major problem:

*How many things could happen in 72 hours of your life*

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<sup>56</sup> It also has been studied how the idea of leisure time as a time for their own is strange to them even among those in paid employment. Research made by SEYMOUR shows the difference of perception of leisure between husband and wife, even when she is the breadwinner of the family. Whilst man always keep the idea of a free time for their own, it seldom happens with the wife.

<sup>57</sup> *O Cruzeiro*, 26/3/55.

<sup>58</sup> Walita Blender.. *O Cruzeiro*:31, 28/2/1953.

<sup>59</sup> Pirex. *O Cruzeiro* 28/5/55.

<sup>60</sup> Canned Feijoada Wilson. *O Cruzeiro*:84, 19/9/53.

<sup>61</sup> SEYMOUR, *ibid*

<sup>62</sup> Chiefly in contexts of little domestic help available.

<sup>63</sup> New multicoloured silk thread gave a startling result to the plain 'daisy stitch' substituting the time/labour demanding satin-stitch.

*You are young just once in your life... do learn how to enjoy it.*<sup>64</sup>

In that running against age, there is no time to loose. Modernity also means simplicity, speed, saving efforts and indeed accomplishing startling results:

- *So quickly you will need a chronometer to measure its speed*
- *You will see such a transformation overnight that will make you overjoyed*
- *Exchange 1 minute a day for health and beauty*
- *Get 5 hours of beauty in 30 seconds!*<sup>65</sup>

Giving the Brazilian middle-class domestic context at that time, at a first glance messages about saving time/efforts could appear to be another 'out-of-the-place' idea. However, this idea that time is always in short supply was a decisive sign of identification with the 'modern way of life'. The material exchanged among members of the mentioned Reader's Club shows clearly this association between time and modernity. It was revealed in signs such as the increased popularity of the less time demanding one-course-meal for parties, or Sunday lunch; new forms of embroidery stitches – quick and easy to do, to substitute the previous more elaborated ones.<sup>66</sup> Thus the decoding of these messages about saving time had nothing to do with lack of domestic help, but with the need to conciliate traditions (such as embroidering every possible piece of fabric used at home) with the new demands over housewifery and motherhood.

Brazilian women in the 1950s had to deal with these two ways of considering time – the 'timelessness' of domestic tasks, which evolves in circles, synthesised in housewives' complaint "no time to call my own," in order to fulfil the demands over the new domestic roles; and the exigencies of catching a 'time for her own,' for the necessary cares to remain young and beautiful –performing the exigencies of modern wife's role, encapsulating in one the seductive object and the altercentered subject.

## *Conclusion*

In the 1950s two different conceptions of the ideal home were revealed by magazines and religious manuals: there was the modern, functional, scientific and rationally planned house replete with effort-saving and time-saving devices displayed by

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<sup>64</sup> Advertisements of Modess, 1944.

<sup>65</sup> *Melhoral* - a pain-killer; *Ponds*; *Antisardina* – both beauty creams; *Creme Pó Compacto Coty*, a compact rice powder.

<sup>66</sup> New multicoloured silk thread gave a startling result to the plain 'daisy stitch', substituting the time/labour demanding satin-stitch.

advertisements; and the moral space urged by the didactic literature where religion, tradition and the [ideal extended] family would find a 'safe haven' against the evils of progress and imported modern values. The first was the domain of the efficient up-to-date housewife; the second the domain of the re-edited Victorian angel, the guardian of the spiritual values of society.

However, comparing the woman's role in both models, it becomes clear that rather than opposition, there was a mere actualisation of the traditional model. Familial scenes displayed in advertisements helped to disseminate a pattern of relationship less hierarchical and more egalitarian, building up the figure of the ideal 'supermum.' Her proficient ruling of the house - a spotless residence (without the danger of germs and contamination), balanced meals, and whiter than white clothes were to be a way of lavishing love over the family and reaffirming woman's virtue.

Nevertheless, Gustavo Corção, a conservative Catholic writer envisaged family chaos in consequence of the popularisation of flats as substitute for the suburban detached houses and cottages. For him, house and street were becoming interchangeable places, since flats were becoming increasingly smaller making it impossible to keep the old forms of sociability at home. Such devaluation of home/house would bring the devaluation of the family in its rites, becoming an invitation to remain single.<sup>67</sup> He foresaw that quite soon women would also be rejecting the idea of marriage: "Although they still regard matrimony as a happy ending, they gradually will be used to the idea that idle love is better than marriage. Moreover, people want to award women the same rights of men – and no one questions men's rights to this trifling kind of love."<sup>68</sup>

Middle-class woman, who had embodied the guilt derived from the impossibility of reaching unattainable religious ideal, and scruples, from the uncertainty of rightfully attending the directives of religious rules, started to have another powerful source for worries. Advertisements blamed the mother for all domestic failures - from the low standard of lavatory cleaning to children's tooth decay. They worked upon insecurities and anxieties borrowed from the [likewise unattainable] standards of motherhood and housewifery imposed by the media.

Home was also an eloquent display of feminine power. The 'lady-of-the-house' should have perfect control over time and space, exercising a subtle but firm dominion over the whole family. Hers was the responsibility of ruling the home so as to embody the family's best values. Home should be a demonstration of the family's social status and the

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<sup>67</sup> It is important to note that house and home are respectively translated as *casa* and *lar* in Portuguese. However, *lar* is more properly the equivalent of the hearth, and likewise today a more literary word. Thus, both house and home are identified in the word '*casa*.' This makes Corção's critiques more understandable.

<sup>68</sup>CORÇÃO, *ibid.*:134.

wife's good taste (unconsciously revealing the family's social origin), and a way to fix the boundaries between the family's peer group and others.

Home was the place of the permitted and sacred sexuality between husband and wife. As was argued in an earlier chapter, although he could maintain lovers outside home, it was his duty to prevent that the slightest rumour about this could reach his home, tainting the utmost respect he owed to his wife. On the other hand, although knowing about his love affairs, it was the wife's point of honour to make believe that she was oblivious. She had the honourable position of the 'Mother of his children' and the two forms of sexuality could never be confused.

Thus she had to guarantee home as a moral, gendered, and classed space - with more masculine public, and more feminine private spaces, and ways of circulation in order to segregate the family and their pairs from servants and lower-class persons. And chiefly she should keep away loose persons, whose moral or class standards prevented them from being considered part of the family peer group.

Contrary to the home economist's dream and religious authors' fear, domestic appliances had not freed women from housework nor made them rush from home to enter the labour market. In Brazil, where middle-class woman could count on servants, the housewife would remain 'the Queen of the Hearth'<sup>69</sup> for several years to come.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> This form is more common in Brazil than the Victorian equivalent 'Angel of the Hearth.'

<sup>70</sup> This was at least the ideal publicised by magazines, and assumed by middle class woman to be the correct perspective of feminine life.



# Conclusion

This thesis concerned the ways by which the feminine identity of a determined social class was formed in the historical context of the Brazilian 1950s, focusing on two important facets of femininity - domesticity and sexuality. The choice of bibliographic sources of several types provided a broader view of the process and illuminated its shifts, contradictions, paradoxes and ambiguities.

The concept of the construction of Femininity involves the internalisation of what it means to be a woman in a certain time, space and cultural environment. It is the unconscious and ongoing process of embodiment of messages, symbols, codes, norms embedded in minor rituals, objects, gestures, which compose the middle-class girl's daily life. Thus to have a social identity is to live in accord with socially accepted prescriptions and to have the ascribed appropriate behaviour for one's gender and social class.

Nonetheless these prescriptions are not monolithic — “They are drawn from the fund of interpretative possibilities available to agents in specific societies.”<sup>1</sup> In the Brazilian 1950s, it was argued, these interpretative possibilities centred around the Catholic ideology<sup>2</sup> plus the ‘complex of honour,’ of Iberian tradition, which has feminine virginity/fidelity as its touchstone. Moreover, they must be understood in the specific context of a period which started with the post-war ideals of building a new world (country) and ended in a government which is “kept in social memory as the expression of freedom, humour, cultural expansion, national development and democracy.”<sup>3</sup>

From the available interpretative possibilities, stress was given to the prescriptive discourse of religious literature which was replicated in the fantasies of romantic novels; and the persuasive discourse of the mass media. These discourses were not absolutely in accordance (manuals and novels) neither in frank opposition (manuals and mass media) but they interrelated in more complex ways.

As advertisements could not give offence to the public, or they would not be attractive, their discourses were adapted to Brazilian cultural values. Yet patterns of behaviour and the ideal woman drawn by the media seemed to go in direct opposition to the

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<sup>1</sup> FRASER, 1992:52.

<sup>2</sup> Ideology is taken here as a matrix of norms and interpretations.

<sup>3</sup> This refers more specifically to the period of JK's government. BOMENY, 1991:144.

ideal Catholic woman. The idea that the glamorous siren that man encountered in public spaces had to be counteracted by a charming figure at home provided a point of convergence between the discourse of the media and of the religious manuals, starting the process of erotisation of matrimony. It should be a domesticated seduction closeted within the home for the husband's exclusive delight. Thus beauty care was no more considered solely an issue for single women, rather the wife's body would also to be cared for, kept young, made beautiful. Manuals and advertisements saw in it "the secret of perennial happiness" and the way to assure man's fidelity.

Romances in its turn, replicated the moral messages of manuals through heroes and heroines who perfectly embodied religious values and patterns of behaviour. The ambience, metaphors and vocabulary of novels, however, tantalised the girl's imagination, indulging desires and fantasies around a sexuality vicariously lived, which ran against the religious prescriptions.

Even the religious manuals which gave voice to the Catholic doctrine did not constitute an homogeneous block. Modern religious tendencies interpreted the alternatives left in this apparently monolithic ideology, trying to make compatible the preaching of the pope and the exigencies of the so called modern world.

All of these sources had in common the discussion of sexuality, which lay behind their discourses about Femininity: the repressed sexuality of virgins, either nuns or maids; the disciplined sexuality of married couples; the unrestrained sexuality of women in male fantasy. They also refer to the equilibrium between 'traditional' modesty, preached by the Church, and the 'modern' seductive art backed by advertisements.

The repressed sexuality of Catholic virgins or dutiful 'family girls' was praised in the system of honour of this time: 'good girls' waiting for a husband or virgin nuns already married to the Son of God mirrored Mary, the asexual Mother of God – an unattainable ideal of Femininity. The unruly sexuality of the daughters of Eve, epitomised in the '*other girls*', the '*garotas faladas*'; or the '*false virgins*' peopled masculine fantasies in pornographic comics. Disciplined sexuality with the bearing of many children was the duty of Catholic couples, who were to pay the 'conjugal debt' one owed to the other, without falling under the spell of birth control. Sexuality was also the shadow behind the apprenticeship of proper behaviour towards the other sex. A girl needed to learn how to fulfil almost contradictory ideals: defending one's modesty without being aggressive; being warmly affectionate without looking easy; modest without appearing frigid.

Attention paid to the education at convents schools; to the new laic movements; to the Brazilian version of the Guiding Movement and to Beauty Contests made it possible to balance the rhetoric of these discourses destined to women.

Under a strong influence of the more intellectual trend of the Catholic Church, Guiding assumed a particular feature in Brazil quite different to its American and most European counterparts. It became an informal but intellectually sophisticated movement for middle to upper class girls. Although complementary to the convent school in its objectives of forming an influential elite — where mothers and wives had an important part — the features of such ideal seemed to be in opposition.

Convents emphasised the traditional model of exacerbated femininity, preparing girls to become 'the Queen of the House.' These women would assume an ideal role of apparent passivity and submission whilst openly exercising her power over servants and children and subrepticiously, over the husband. They were to master the role of the great woman behind the [great] man.

The ideal woman envisaged by the Girl Guides' Movement rejected exacerbation of femininity and its 'exteriorities.' The Girl Guides wore a uniform regarded as masculine because of its military look, which also freed them from the small cares with manners.<sup>4</sup> The Movement aimed to prepare them to undertake a modern active role as citizens, as professionals but chiefly as better endowed women to assume wifedom and motherhood according to the challenges posed by 'modern times.' They were to be the competent and influential woman beside the [great]man.

Another facet of this active feminine role had been unintentionally derived from the Catholic laic movements for students. They preached that religion was to be lived on daily life and the word of the Gospel to be understood in a broader way. This message was taken to its limit: several of these female students became political activists and some of them would later join the revolutionary movements against the military dictatorship, after 1964.

The Queens of Beauty Contests (called 'as *misses*') represented another distinctive aspect of femininity. They encapsulated the concept of the feminine body envisaged by the media, ideologically fragmented to be pampered by new, scientific and specialised beauty cares.

These characters summarise the variants of the feminine role in middle class terms: the '*Misses*' perfectly embodied the Seductive Object ideal, whilst Girl Guides and JUC members, having as an ideal the purpose of serving the Other, in different ways mastered the role of Altercentered Subject. It is possible to venture that the new feminine ideal conceived by the media and manuals was embodied by the Convent Girls, who were to become seductive yet domesticated to better fulfil their altercentered role.

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<sup>4</sup> They wore shorts under the skirts, so they could freely jump, sit on the ground without caring whether their lingerie and thighs were showing off. As the public in general did not have this information, their 'lack' of proper manners used to scandalise the people (for the guide's delight).

Alongside the analysis of these characters, the reflection was also directed to the male imaginary. It has been assumed that gender is a relational category, concerning man and woman. Under this label research about masculinity has begun to divide the previous hegemonic field of women's studies, but in general they are separately studied, and the relationship between masculinity and femininity is seldom taken into consideration. The analysis of the male imaginary about both the feminine, and their own role is an attempt to understand such relationship in Brazilian terms.

The investigation of pornographic comics and the work of male cartoonists made possible to refine the analysis of the hegemonic models imposed by the discourses of the Church and of the media. Nor did these male works pulled against them, but as they stressed a transgressive pattern of sexuality (in the comics), and counterpoint the 'clichés' of romantic love, of man supremacy and female submissiveness, they formed a bridge between discourse and practice. Moreover, they reinforced these models and paradoxically opened space for them to be contested.

The corrosive humour of Carlos Estevão exemplifies the gap between 'fantasy' of the media and 'reality' of the daily life of readership: marriage is far from the everlasting happiness of fairy tales and Hollywood films; ordinary women are distant from the beauty ideal of film stars; signs of modernity displayed as a must of fashion by the media are to be ridiculed rather than be followed. Nevertheless, as he stressed the pathetic efforts of women to match such ideals, he assumed the successful power of the media to impose hegemonic models. Moreover, his cartoons constitute an important directory of what was fashionable in the 1950s, and despite his critiques, he contributed to their dissemination. His work encapsulates the tensions between traditional values and modern patterns of behaviour.

To these data were added the images of masculinity as metaphorically pictured in a set of patterns used to embroider tea-towels. These images reproduced the stereotype of man as breadwinner, who consequently has the right to indulge his leisure time as he pleased. The use of patterns for domestic crafts as source of data about the feminine imaginary constitutes an original contribution of this work.

The symbolic aspects of consumerism under the perspective of gender remains as an unexplored field of study in Brazil. The analysis of advertisements for products destined for beauty care and home appliances brings a further contribution. It shows how a new body of knowledge, later to become part of common-sense was incorporated by the middle classes. Although products and publicity were imported, several Brazilian professionals worked in the local branches of these foreign agencies of propaganda. It was argued that advertisements were culturally adapted allowing other diverse readings of the original.

Advertisements did not only intervene in the lives of the people by changing patterns of consumerism or suggesting new needs. They pictured new examples of behaviour envisaged as modern, and new patterns of familial relationship that gradually were assimilated. The 'psychologization' of the family and the process of modernisation of behaviour – including the rapid increase of women in higher education, and their break into the labour market – contributed to deep changes into the family and the domestic domain in the 1950s. Further research would be needed to confirm the impression that advertisements contributed to these changes in a more significant way than other forms of intellectual discourse, because of its power of persuasion and its penetration of a broader public.

Advertisements envisioned a new concept of woman who had to be convinced through scientific argument. Beauty was associated with hygiene and youth and sold alongside ideas of modernity and romance. The proliferation of beauty contests and the increasing presence of new trade marks of cosmetics and toiletries in the Brazilian market might not be a mere coincidence. Behind the construction of the new feminine body there were important economic interests. However consumerism can not be regarded as false conscience, a perverse facet of capitalism which enslaves woman (and man) to the caprices of fashion. Nor can it be considered simply from the consumer's view point that products are desirable and play an important part in fulfilling fantasies. Rather consumerism might be analysed as an interplay between these two fields of interests, where one does not dismiss the importance of the other, a theoretical viewpoint to be further pursued.

The analysis of home decoration is also a less explored field in Brazil. The place given to home in the reports of the *Revista do Rádio* illuminates the importance of the ideal of domesticity at the time. Moreover the analysis of the decoration of these radio stars' houses made evident how patterns of taste reproduced the habitus of one's social class. This is another field to be enlarged and further researched.

This thesis aimed to show the emergence of the new middle class woman: she had been reared in accordance with the traditional doctrine of the 'Holy Mother, the Catholic Church,' and the code of honour, both perfectly embodied in the heroines of the romantic novels that she used to read. In her turn, that new woman also embodied subtle lessons of femininity which pervaded the gendered environment where she lived, studied, played and prayed. She had been reared with just one aim — to become the perfect [house] wife, beholding it as the perfect fulfilment of the female vocation.

She had also been exposed to the increased mass media influence, which expressed in 1950s terms, the lessons of modernity — synthesised in the idea of breaking with the past. She became the seductive object and the altercentered subject. In her new roles, she learned how to consume cosmetics and toiletries in order to become modernly

beautiful, and acquired the skills to create the technological home where the psychologized family would together enjoy modernity.

Woman was educated under a foreign tradition, her fantasies stimulated by Victorian and Edwardian novels, by Hollywood films, their joys and pains of love were voiced through American songs. From America came the new 'scientific' products to free her from the monthly burden; to give sparkling eyes, soft skin, shining and perfumed hair; audacious and tender lips, making her charming prince bound by her charms, and husbands eternally repeating gestures of love. She dreamed of the American fitted kitchen, of a home full of domestic appliances, and saving-time devices to replace their servants in their days off, thus liberating them to the beauty cares, to embellishing home, to embroidering every possible piece of fabric used at home.

This leaves us with the question of what was specifically Brazilian in that middle class woman, in the 1950s.

Here it is assumed that these foreign influences were amalgamated to Brazilian traditions and adapted to our 'national' identity, turning out to be a different issue from the original. The result would be neither a clone of the foreign culture nor the 'indigenous' tradition in its purity, but another item incorporated to the dynamics of the Brazilian cultural process.

Faced with these foreign patterns of behaviour, woman knew that modesty had to prevail and reputation could not be put at risk. Although their stricter patterns of behaviour could be seen as a limiting factor in the process of modernity, women did envisage them as correct, as the right way to behave.<sup>5</sup> Because of the higher value paid to feminine virginity/fidelity, Brazilian women represented themselves as more attached to moral values more homebound; and as a whole, a more joyful, easy-going and warmer people than the American or European. Such affirmations must be justified into the broader context of Brazilian self representations.

It is possible to suppose that in the historical context of the 1950s, the optimistic faith in the future of the nation contributed to a higher level of self-esteem. In Brazil there is the common belief that the country have been privileged by God with natural beauty and resources, and lack of cataclysms, thus people would only need good opportunities to transform such potential into wealth. On the other hand, there were poor living conditions and an unequal and unfair social order. It is believed that only a people with versatility could juggling the situation. A versatility that is paralleled with the body flexibility needed to

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<sup>5</sup> What was regarded as backwardness was 'public talk' arisen suspicions about one's reputation.

dribble the contestants in football and to dance to the rhythm of samba. This is called to have '*jogo de cintura*'<sup>6</sup> and regarded as a national characteristic.

Thus a country where everything works properly, and norms and law are the same for everyone do not provide the grounds for such versatility. That is why in such countries people do not have '*jogo de cintura*.' At the same time that Brazilians envy such living conditions, and praise their people's straightforwardness, they joke about — and in a sense despise — their lack of '*jogo de cintura*.'<sup>7</sup> Hence the common belief that once the people could be healthier, better feed and schooled, Brazil would be the leading nation of the world, because of this idiosyncratic 'natural' characteristic.<sup>8</sup>

It is possible therefore to affirm that Brazilian woman in the 1950s wanted to copy American/European life style, to consume their goods, to have the benefits of modernity and affluence, but they did not want to be one of them, loosing the characteristics of being Brazilian.

This thesis also aimed to show how the social construction of urban middle class femininity in the Brazilian 1950s is of paramount importance in the constitution of the modern market, part of the political project of the building of a modern industrialised nation.

The process of modernisation and the insertion of Brazil in the global economy, by the military dictatorship from 1964 on, has its roots in the nationalist project of the 1950s. In other conditions, in the Brazilian 1990s there is an attempt to insert the country into the new process of globalization. These political and economic projects benefit or affect the daily lives of families who incorporate new habits, new needs, consume new products or are forced to adjust their patterns of living.

However, the symbolic aspects of these processes are seldom taken into consideration. Apart from the more economical or demographic analysis or speculations of the media, there are no studies about the effect of these political projects and economic process over the everyday reality of families. Now and then, new habits, new needs are

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<sup>6</sup> (literally flexibility of the waist). The metaphor of the body is also taken in its literal sense: It is due to having in excess '*jogo de cintura*' that Brazilian believe we are masters in football and the only people able to dance *samba*.

<sup>7</sup> People also despised their politicians who are believed to be the responsible for such situation. For a broader analysis of other Brazilian idiosyncratic features such as *jeitinho*, *malandragem* which can refine this schematic presentation, see Roberto DaMatta's work in general.

<sup>8</sup> There is several anecdotes around national stereotypes, where the Brazilian person although represented as weaker, poorer, less educated than the others always succeeded in reverting an unfavourable situation because of its versatility, and a more cunning mind. They are analogous to the fables in which the weaker animal (the rabbit, the turtle) succeeds over the bigger and stronger ones. Meaningfully and by contrast, more recently became popular the story that after God had made such naturally marvellous country He said - now, wait and see what kind of *gentinha* will be inhabiting there. *Gentinha* the diminutive form of *gente* = people, person has a strong pejorative connotation. The analysis of the jokes we tell about ourselves provide good evidence of the changes of mood, hope in the future, or in the capacity of surpassing the unjust conditions of the country.

(were) incorporated, new products are (were) consumed and families are (were) forced to adequate their patterns of living to 'new realities.'

As a consequence of the Development Project of the Brazilian 1950s, different middle-class groups raised their aspirations, and fully or partially shared in the benefits of the so-called 'Brazilian Miracle' of the 1970s, when the military dictatorship was committed to building the 'The Great Brazil.'<sup>9</sup> From their megalomaniac purposes, the nation inherited a huge debt, several unfinished projects and a gradual process of impoverishment for the middle class downwards.

Since the turn of the 1980s, there is a new project of promoting Brazil to the First World. To insert the country into the new global order, all the old political and economic ideas inspired by nationalism are being reviewed.<sup>10</sup> In the 1990s many middle-class groups are having to lower their aspirations, substituting their old patterns of consumption, and changing their life-style. Again the symbolic aspects of this process have not been analysed.

Finally this raises the question about the lessons that the present can learn from the past. Rather than intending to provide a single answer to this question, this thesis aimed to contribute empirical evidence for such reflection, believing that the ideal of constructing a new nation in the 1950s can reveal much for the understanding of an analogous process of the 1990s.

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<sup>9</sup> From a late evaluation by the media, these decades are now popularly called the Golden Years (1950); the Rebel Years (the 1960s) and the Lead Years (the 1970s), – for being coincidental with the worst and tough period of the military dictatorship.

<sup>10</sup> For the nationalism in the 1950s see Chapter 1 of this thesis.



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