

JESÚS CRUZ. *The Rise of Middle-Class Culture in Nineteenth-Century Spain*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2011. 294pp.

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In *The Rise of Middle-Class Culture in Nineteenth-Century Spain*, Jesús Cruz challenges the idea that Spain differed from its European neighbors in the development of a strong middle-class culture. Cruz argues that despite the smaller size of the middle class in Spain, its values and cultural practices became hegemonic and laid the groundwork for Spain's contemporary democratic, consumer society. This was achieved through three main processes: 1) new rules of behavior that were widely disseminated through conduct manuals, 2) the promotion of consumer culture with the dual aims of economic growth and personal contentment, and 3) the establishment of a material culture with specific symbolic components that served as class markers. Cruz makes sure to define his terms and methodologies. *Middle class* and *bourgeoisie* are used synonymously to refer to a "diverse social conglomerate situated between the old nobility and the working classes" (10), and *culture* is defined as "a cluster of conventional models of thought and behavior that include value systems, beliefs, norms of conduct, and even forms of political organization and economic activity" (15). Theoretically Cruz bases much of his study on Norbert Elias' ideas about the role of courtesy norms in the "civilizing process," and Pierre Bourdieu's concepts of social field, cultural capital and *habitus*.

While the issues addressed above are articulated in chapter one, chapter two studies new middle-class behavioral norms through nineteenth-century conduct manuals. Even though polite society (*sociedad de buen tono*) still consisted mainly of a privileged, educated minority, access was no longer restricted to those of aristocratic birth; it was now open to anyone who could embody the urbanity promoted in the conduct books of the time, making refined conduct a form of cultural capital in and of itself. These books emphasized the emulation of all the things European, especially French, virtuous behavior and an active social life. Conduct manuals also contained a good deal of information on hygiene, physical fitness, and fashion. Although they were written primarily for men, a few books were written specifically for women. While these manuals continued to emphasize women's pivotal role within the home, they also stressed women's growing importance in the social sphere. By the end of the century, these new modes of conduct applied to a much wider segment of the population and became the dominant cultural norm.

In chapter three Cruz examines the home as both an ideal (mainly as it is imagined in conduct literature) and as a material reality (through probate inventories from Madrid's notarial archives.) The interest in improving interior living environments can be linked to an overall rise in importance of domesticity, privacy, and consumerism. Wealth and distinction were conveyed by the location of the family home or *piso*—the most desirable living spaces were on the lower floors—and by tasteful interior decoration. In the city, most Spaniards lived in urban apartments rather than single-family dwellings. In terms of space and layout, a logical floor plan and clearly delineated spaces for social interaction and private family gatherings were the ideal. Some of the amenities included in the newer homes were gas lighting and heating, and running water

and flushing toilets. Another important phenomenon affecting housing was the moving out of Madrid's historic downtown into new residential areas, the *ensanches*, such as the Salamanca and Argüelles neighborhoods.

Chapter four explores the rise of consumer culture through the purchasing of textiles and garments, the fashion industry, fashion publications, and changes in retailing practices. Cruz first looks at studies of bridal trousseaus in Catalonia, which indicate an increase in the consumption of textiles (linens, blankets, curtains, clothing, etc.). Cruz attributes this not only to the rise in consumer demand but also to the flourishing Catalan textile industry that made these fabrics increasingly affordable. The first fashion publication, *Correo de las Damas*, appeared in Madrid in 1833. Publications like this one combined information and images with an ideology generally supportive of the Catholic values of motherhood and domesticity. Much later in the century advertisements began to appear in the fashion press. Turning his attention to retail, Cruz discusses the rise of the ready-made clothing business, the use of fixed prices, and the appearance of the first department store.

In chapter 5 Cruz shows how middle-class culture informed the expansion and redesign of Spain's urban centers, mainly Barcelona and Madrid. Plans for urban expansion (*ensanche*) were intended to improve living conditions –make cities and individual homes both more comfortable and hygienic– and accommodate the growth in population and markets. Also the call for refinement in conduct manuals demanded appropriate outdoor spaces for strolling and gathering, as well as clean, luxurious, exclusive, interior spaces such as cafés, theaters, museums, athenaeums, and restaurants that established spatial boundaries between the social classes. In Barcelona, Ildefons Cerdà's *eixample* (extension) was approved in 1859 and was shaped by his positivist and utilitarian goal of creating a city that would foster the collective welfare of its citizens, accommodate the latest technological advances (especially in transportation), and address hygiene concerns. In Madrid, it was also the need for more space and salutatory living conditions that got Carlos María de Castro's *Plan de ensanche* approved in 1860. His plan situated most of the expansion around the old city and to the north and east making Salamanca and Argüelles the most emblematic neighborhoods of the new middle classes.

The middle-class emphasis on leisure is the topic of chapter six. Enjoying certain types of entertainment was now an essential part of becoming a member of polite society. Important spaces for such activities were cafés, theaters, *tertulias*, academies, athenaeums, and parks. Theater was the most popular social activity after bullfighting and the social aspect of the theater was at least as important as the plays themselves. Opera was also popular, conferring cultural capital on an aspiring bourgeoisie since its high cost and restrictive seating made it an elite activity. Pleasure gardens, known in Spain as *jardines de recreo* or *jardines públicos*, were the precursor to public parks. By the end of the century, however, none of the original pleasure gardens had survived urban growth. Spanish casinos provided a space for male social interaction and public activities while athenaeums specifically had as their aim “the moral and intellectual formation of citizens”(200). The creation of the Prado Museum, the National Museum of Natural Sciences and the Museum of Archaeology is another example of the combination of leisure with cultural edification. Finally, the nineteenth-century obsession with health and hygiene was directly related to the birth of vacationing, tourism, and the practice of modern sports.

Jesús Cruz does an excellent job of challenging the view that the nineteenth-century Spanish bourgeoisie simply imitated aristocratic manners and customs and was less committed to modernity than their European counterparts. Rather, he paints a picture in which the aristocracy and the haute-bourgeoisie together participated in the forging of new cultural values and practices in line with liberalism and modernity, even if political divisions remained. In fact, many of these new cultural practices, such as consumerism, personal hygiene, manners and leisure, were embraced by a much wider segment of society, leading Cruz to assert that despite the restricted numbers of Spain's middle class, the influence of the middle-class culture extended beyond the middle classes themselves. Nineteenth-century bourgeois culture's claim to hegemony can also be seen in its influence in contemporary culture (i.e., consumerism, the contemporary bourgeois home, etc.). Scholars of literature and cultural studies might find Cruz's book a bit light on analysis. However, his assertion and solid defense of a bold thesis, the wealth of cultural information he provides, and the clear prose with which he writes, make his book a necessary and enjoyable read for any scholar interested in the history and culture of nineteenth-century Spain.

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