

CHAPTER 9

A Turma do Pererê

Visualizations of Gender in a Brazilian Children's Comic

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This chapter examines visual representations of gender as portrayed through the children's comic book *A Turma do Pererê* (Pererê's Gang) by Ziraldo Alves Pinto, originally published in Brazil between 1960 and 1964. *A Turma do Pererê* follows the adventures of Saci Pererê, a black one-legged mischievous character from Brazilian folklore, and his group of human and animal friends. Female characters are the minority in the comic and play small roles as romantic interests or maternal figures, yet their occasional appearances portray much about gender roles during the period in which the comic was produced. *A Turma do Pererê* functioned as an informal manual of socialization, training, and educating children in the ambiguity of gender that marked Brazilian culture in the early 1960s. The comic's few female characters reflect the comparatively small role that Brazilian women played in political life during this period. The stories promote contradictory messages, portraying female characters as both submissive and independent, reflecting the questions that were emerging about traditional gender roles at the time.

A Brazilian Vision of Gender

In both North America and Europe, the 1960s were a time of cultural upheaval and transition during which issues of race, class, and gender were fundamentally

questioned. In contrast, Brazil at the time was mired in a different category of social unrest. Political clashes between conservatives and leftists regarding the role of communism, industrialization, and agrarian reform in Brazil's development eventually led to the 1964 coup d'état that would result in 21 years of military rule. The social climate in 1960s Brazil was one of repression and torture, which left little room for the social transformations that were occurring in northern climes. Among leftist intellectuals, the organized resistance to the military dictatorship was seen as the priority that dominated all other social issues or potential areas of social change. While women in the Northern hemisphere read Betty Friedan and Simone de Beauvoir and participated in consciousness-raising groups, politically minded Brazilian women focused instead on the struggle against the military regime. In this context, the fight for women's issues was downplayed as a bourgeois distraction from the militant left's fight to overturn political repression (Pinto 2003, 25).

In *Ideologia e Utopia nos Anos 60: Um Olhar Feminino*, Lia Faria emphasizes the lack of female participation in many of the politically important events of the period during which *A Turma do Pererê* was originally published: "As principais lideranças e mitos são masculinos, cabendo às mulheres um papel secundário na construção dessas utopias que movimentaram os anos 60" (The principal leaderships and myths are male, with women playing a secondary role in the construction of the utopias that shook up the 1960s; Faria 1997, 24). Prior to the coup d'état, women were involved in political groups that strove to advocate for social justice in general, such as the Liga Feminina do Estado de Guanabara (founded in 1960). In 1962, lawyer Romy Medeiros successfully advocated for the Estatuto da Mulher Casada, which protected the financial rights of women within the institution of marriage. After 1964, the struggle against military repression and control dominated leftist activism to the point that political actions led by women virtually disappeared, only emerging again in the 1970s (Teles 1993, 51). Some Brazilians were publishing their writings on women's issues in the 1960s (Muraro 1966; Saffioti 1969), but these ideas were seen as part of a general atmosphere of discussion that had developed in the era prior to the military coup.

Joana Maria Pedro writes that along with the dictatorship came a "clima" de discussão e reflexão sobre aquilo que se chamava de 'condição de mulher.' As idéias, os debates, os livros, já estavam circulando. Estas idéias passaram a fazer parte de movimentações somente nos anos setenta" (a climate of discussion and reflection about what was referred to as "the female condition." The ideas, the debates, the books were already in circulation. These ideas came to be part of social movements only in the 1970s; Pedro 2008, 62).¹

While the term *feminismo* did not enter the Brazilian cultural mainstream until the 1970s, in the 1960s, there was a shift in the way that gender was both

thought about and represented in popular culture. New ideas were in circulation. Both traditional and progressive ideas were in play about how to be a Brazilian woman, and the line between the two was often muddled, creating an ambiguity that was particularly apparent in popular culture. In her exploration of the women's magazine *Cláudia*, Ilane Ferreira Cavalcante shows that this ambiguity was revealed in the magazine's images of women who fulfilled traditional roles while simultaneously cultivating modern styles and appearances (2011/12, 54).

A Turma do Pererê portrayed a mythology of gender that was particular to 1960s Brazilian middle-class culture, further influencing the way gender was understood by its child readers. The comic both reflected and perpetuated concepts of gender that were being explored during the period of its publication. The atmosphere of ambiguity toward gender roles at the time is revealed in the comic's side-by-side promotion of feminine values of traditional domesticity and modern independence. In the arsenal of feminine traits available to the comic's female characters, physical appearance and attractiveness as well as intellectual manipulation are tools that are valued in relationships with the opposite sex.

Examining representations of gender in such a text raises several issues. Given the centrality of racial identity and mixture in Brazilian culture, an exploration of gender in a Brazilian context must overlap with a simultaneous exploration of race. In addition, constructing a single definition of femininity or manhood in any culture assumes the universality of gendered experience to the neglect of other social distinctions such as race and class. Lia Faria points out that it is easiest for women who are members of the Brazilian white elite to break down and surpass gender boundaries; contending solely with gendered oppression, they do not have to navigate the parallel societal constraints of poverty and racial difference (1997, 25). In this chapter, I examine gender representations in Brazilian texts, mindful that the structures of race, class, and gender in Brazil have historically evolved as mechanisms for control from the nation's origins as a patriarchal agrarian colony.

Saci Pererê: From Folklore to Mass Media

In Brazilian folklore, as opposed to the comics, *saci pererê* is a one-legged mischievous creature with very black skin that wears a red cap and is often portrayed smoking a pipe. Between 1960 and 1964, the artist Ziraldo Alves Pinto published a children's comic book that was based on this popular image. Ziraldo's Saci was a boy residing in a mythical and rural Brazilian landscape called Mata do Fundão, and the comic's stories followed the adventures he had with his gang of friends, an assortment of anthropomorphized animals and indigenous

children.² There are few female characters, and they play relatively small roles in the series, generally as romantic interests or maternal figures. Their occasional appearances convey much about gender roles during the period in which the comic was produced.

A variety of representations of the folkloric figure of *saci pererê* attest to his development over time in Brazilian popular culture. *O Saci-Pererê: Um Inquérito* was a text published in 1917 that collected accounts of the São Paulo public's understanding of *saci pererê* and provides historical perspective on his place in the local culture, where he was commonly introduced to children in domestic settings by female slaves or relatives.³ Monteiro Lobato's book *O Saci*, originally published in 1932, is an example of *saci's* initial depiction in children's literature, formalizing through publication a character that had previously been introduced to a young audience by oral tradition. In the 1977 edition of *O Saci*, with illustrations by Manoel Victor Filho, *saci* is diminutive and gnome-like, with distinctly Africanized features.

Luiz de Câmara Cascudo, an esteemed Northeastern folklorist, provided further scholarly background on the character's place in broader Brazilian society through his descriptions in *Geografia dos Mitos Brasileiros* (1947). Cascudo's *saci* is "uma entidade maléfica em muitas, graciosa e zombeteira noutras oportunidades" (an often evil entity, who was at times charming and mocking; 557), most common in the southern states of Brazil, who entertains himself by causing minor domestic disturbances. He identifies *Saci's* ever-present slouchy red cap as a *pileus romano*, a classical symbol that traditionally signified wealth and freedom for the wearer and later became an emblem for republican movements around the world.

After four years of publication, the last issue of *A Turma do Pererê* was released in April of 1964, the month that the Brazilian military assumed political control in a coup d'état. Until this point, Ziraldo had seen himself as relatively apolitical, referring to himself as "uma espécie de humanista sem maiores preocupações políticas" (a kind of humanist without greater political preoccupations) who created humorous cartoons and caricatures of local customs, but the military takeover marked the "época da [sua] conscientização política" (period of his political awakening; Campedelli and Abdala 1982, 10). Ziraldo went on to play a major role in the founding of the politically charged magazine *O Pasquim* in 1969 and during the 21 years of military rule was arrested three times on the grounds of being a "dangerous element" (Campedelli and Abdala 1982, 12). Drawing political cartoons gave way to the creation of several children's books, such as *FLICTS* (1969) and *O Menino Malquinho* (1980), both still popular today.

It was no accident that *A Turma do Pererê* was celebrated for being a representation of Brazilianness. As Moacy Cirne wrote in *História e Crítica dos*

Quadrinhos Brasileiros, "o *Pererê* carregava, dentro de suas aventuras, uma brasilidade perpassada pela euforia política e cultural vivida então" (*Pererê* contained, within its adventures, a Brazilianness that was permeated by the political and cultural euphoria of the time; 1990, 51). The root of this Brazilianness lies, in part, in Ziraldo's use of a universally recognized character from national mythology, widely documented in popular culture throughout the twentieth century, to express an ideology popular at the time of its publication. *A Turma do Pererê* was published in 43 issues between October 1960 and April 1964, but it has since been reissued in a variety of collections. The following analysis is based on a series of republications issued by Editora Abril as comic books in 1975 and 1976 and as a series of collections called *almanagues* in 1991.

"Appropriate Femininity" in *Mata do Fundão*

Ziraldo based each member of the *turma* on a friend from his own childhood in Caratinga, Minas Gerais, giving each character specific individual traits and personalities. *Saci* himself is presented as a sort of boy-myth, maintaining some of the mythical figure's qualities, such as his mischievousness, yet emphasizing his likeness to other ordinary boys. While his physicality clearly separates him from other children, he is of similar stature and demeanor, expressing similar desires.

Saci and *Tininim*, the most human-looking figures of the series, are each complemented by girlfriends of similar appearance and background. Despite Brazil's long tradition of miscegenation, in the world of *A Turma do Pererê*, romantic relationships only develop between physically complementary beings of the same race. *Pererê's* companion is *Boneca de Piche* (literally translated as "Tar Baby" but often referred to simply as *Boneca*, or "Doll"), a girl of similar skin color and height.⁴ Her hair, worn in a puffy bouffant in front and in two wiry braids tied with sharp-looking red ribbons below her ears, is coarse and dense, strongly identifying her blackness. Given the racialized and gendered implications of hair texture in Brazilian culture (Caldwell 2007, 81), *Boneca's* hair emphasizes her position on the "African" end of the Brazilian color spectrum. *Saci*, who is bald, does not possess this blatant marker of racial difference, instead occupying more of a mythical two-dimensional space that is devoid of specific racial identity.

Tuiuiu is *Tininim's* companion, and her body is drawn identically to that of *Boneca*, who is her closest friend. Her brown skin and straight dark hair, cut in a line of bangs that frame her face, reveal her indigenous identity. Tuiuiu is distinguished from other characters by her vanity, clearly demonstrated in stories such as "Tuiuiu: A Feiosa" (Pinto 1976). After going through five hairstyle changes in order to attract the attention of a preoccupied *Tininim*, she is told

that he was busy working hard to purchase a mirror for her as a present, “só pra [ela] ver o tanto que é bonita” (just for her to see how pretty she is). Her concern for her physical appearance and her attractiveness to the opposite sex are presented as a silly waste of time. She immediately jumps to conclusions in worrying that “minha cara não muda nunca . . . estou ficando tão vulgar” (my face never changes . . . I am becoming so common; 47), demonstrating the connection between her self-esteem and the ability to attract attention. Tuiuiu’s self-worth is tied to her beauty, which is proven by the attention she receives from Tinimim as he looks at her, validating her existence as a person. In presenting her with a mirror as a gift, Tinimim emphasizes the importance of her physical appearance, providing her with a tool she can use to see herself as others do. While possession of the mirror gives Tuiuiu the capability to view herself, it further emphasizes the importance of physical appearance and validation implicit in the male gaze, further affirmed at the story’s conclusion in the symbolism of the gift she receives. Tuiuiu only sees herself as beautiful through the eyes of her romantic partner, Tinimim. In *A Turma do Pererê*, girls are defined according to their interactions and relationships with boys, which are affected by their physical appearance.

In *A Turma do Pererê*, each girl character wears a contemporary dress. Tuiuiu appears in a pale blue short-sleeved shirt and Boneca in a red party dress with a defined waist and a flounced skirt, with matching colored flats. Neither female character appears to have gone through puberty: Apart from their contemporary clothing and hairstyles, their bodies show no outward signs of physical womanhood and are remarkably similar to those of their “boyfriends.” Despite a lack of physical maturity, they have wholeheartedly absorbed their gender roles, spending most of their time performing household chores, primping and dressing up, and speculating about the future and the desires of their male companions. The female characters as a rule do not participate in the physical outdoor games and projects that fill the days of the male and anthropomorphized animal characters.

Boneca has a clearly delineated home space as the adopted daughter of Seu Nereu and Dona Mariana, just as Saci has been taken into the home of Mãe Docelina. By contrast, neither indigenous child has a domestic space of his or her own, and there are no references to their parents (adoptive or otherwise). Tinimim is occasionally seen sleeping in a tent in the forest, while Tuiuiu spends time at Boneca’s home. The native children are essentially unsupervised and unanchored regardless of gender, portrayed as the very essence of primitivism.

In general, Boneca and Tuiuiu’s existence as complementary companions to Pererê and Tinimim is emphasized by the relatively small role they play in the series as a whole, rarely appearing in stories that do not specifically focus on their adventures. They are not part of the *turma* themselves but are, instead,

extraneous characters. In occasional stories, they are the focus of the *turma*’s antics, which are directed at capturing their attention and affections.

In their 1971 analysis of *Donald Duck* and other Disney comics published in 1971, Ariel Dorfman and Armand Mattelart point out the particular situation often assigned to female characters in comics: In all the representations they reviewed, females are portrayed as subordinate to the male, and their only form of power is seduction, which is exercised through coquetry (1991, 38). In their singular focus on attracting and maintaining the devotion of the boys, Tuiuiu and Boneca are flirtatiously exerting their only power over the male characters in the comic, because

man is afraid of this kind of woman (who wouldn’t be?). He eternally and fruitlessly courts her, takes her out, competes for her, wants to rescue her, showers her with gifts. Just as the troubadours of courtly love were not permitted carnal contact with the women of their lords, so these eunuchs live in an eternal foreplay with their impossible virgins. Since they can never fully possess them, they are in constant fear of losing them. It is the compulsion of eternal frustration, of pleasure postponed for better domination. (Dorfman and Mattelart 1991, 39)

The concept of romantic love in *A Turma do Pererê* is quite nebulous in relation to this statement. The final objective of the female characters’ endless competition for the attention and loyalty of the male love interests seems to lie solely in the promise of happily ever after. Complete physical and emotional possession of the other can indeed be posited as the end goal, but the explicit details this might entail are understandably absent in view of the comic’s child audience.

In her article “Representações de Gênero em Histórias em Quadrinhos na Década de 1970,” Raquel França dos Santos performs a comparative analysis of two comics published in Brazil in the 1970s that were aimed at an audience of young girls. Both the American import *Luluzinha* (Little Lulu) and the Brazilian series *Mônica* portray femininity in an ambiguous fashion, alternately representing female characters as independent and submissive. While not the focus of this study, *Mônica* provides some insight into the production and reception of *A Turma do Pererê* due to their simultaneous publication and similar audience.⁵

Little Lulu by Marge Buell Henderson began publication as a comic in 1945 in the United States, and was printed in Brazil in 1950 under the title *Luluzinha*. The series was centered around the antics of a mischievous little girl in an urban setting, and many stories revolved around her relationship with her friend Bolinha (Tubby Tompkins in the English version) and the neighborhood boys’ club, which adamantly refuses her entry. *Mônica*, which similarly

chronicles the adventures of a young girl and her friends, was created by the Brazilian artist Maurício de Sousa and published between 1970 and 1987.

In their focus on female characters, both comics communicate messages about femininity and gender relations. In Santos's words, through "os valores transmitidos as crianças" they "funcionaram como inocentes manuais de comportamento" (the values transmitted to children [they] functioned as innocent manuals of behavior; 2004, 23). In their portrayal of gendered characters, the comics necessarily educated their young readers about appropriate ways of functioning in society during the period in which they were produced. Their dominant message, however, appears to be an ambiguous one: In alternating strips, the girls embody either the traditional value of domesticity or the contemporary value of independence. In much the same way, *A Turma do Pererê* reflects the first quiet murmurs that questioned established gender roles in the 1960s. While the majority of the female roles in the series emphasize the traditional values of domesticity and support of a male as a complementary partner, they are presented with an underlying tone of parody and satire, in a reflection of the nonconformist ideas that were beginning to circulate at the time. Girls are defined by their relationships with male characters, but this relational identity is, at the same time, notably unstable and vulnerable to the questions of shifting societal norms, as we go on to observe.

In *A Turma do Pererê*, Boneca and Tuiuiu subscribe, on one level, to an adolescent version of traditional femininity. Despite their young age, they display an accelerated sexuality. Their unsexed bodies reveal that they have yet to enter physical maturity, yet they are prematurely preoccupied with their relations with boys and demonstrate this preoccupation with a desperation more common to the onset of puberty. From the text, it is difficult to determine the root of this discrepancy: Are the female characters meant in some way to function as accurate representations of prepubescent girls in Brazil in the early 1960s? How have they been shaped and distorted by the views of the adult male who has created them?

In their analysis of *Donald Duck* comics, Dorfman and Mattelart point out that children's books are created by adults whose work is determined and justified by their idea of both what a child is and what a child should be (1991, 30). Ziraldo's notion of childhood was clearly defined and shaped by his own personal opinions on race and gender as a member of the white elite. By portraying Tuiuiu as a silly girl who is overly preoccupied with her looks as a way to guarantee her future stability by attaching herself to a male partner, the artist reinforces the idea that feminine identity is essentially relational. In their dependency, both young female characters are depicted as objects that can easily be manipulated in order to ultimately serve the needs of the male characters. As the myth of rapid development free of negative consequences began to unravel in

Brazil in the early 1960s, the struggle to define *brasilidade* in the space between modernity and tradition was also written into the series. These messages about gendered and national identity each reveal the boundaries of social space in the period preceding the dictatorship, reflecting and affirming the beliefs and attitudes of the broader culture.

Ziraldo's Lessons in Rivalry, Romance, and Relationships

Many of the stories featuring the female characters in *A Turma do Pererê* focus on the significant attention that characters give to boyfriend and girlfriend relationships, with the eventual goal of marriage. Boneca and Tuiuiu star in the story "A Adivinhação de São João" (Pinto 2007), which particularly reveals the girls' preoccupation with their future lives in relation to whom they will marry.

The story opens on the night of the Brazilian popular festival of São João, when the girls sneak off from a party around a bonfire to stick knives in the trunk of a banana tree, following the superstition that in the morning their blades will be inscribed with the names of their future husbands. After passing a restless night at Boneca's house, they find that the knives have been inscribed not with the names of Saci Pererê and Tininim, as they had hoped, but with those of their rivals Rufino and Flecha-Firme. The girls then reluctantly ignore the advances of Saci and Tininim, with the idea that "assim, eles sofrerão menos, quando compreenderem!" (this way, they'll suffer less, once they understand!; 13), and attempt to take a liking to the other boys, whom they believe it is their destiny to marry.

Leaving Mata do Fundão to visit the city with Rufino and Flecha-Firme, the girls are disappointed by their companions' vulgar ways as they make physical advances Boneca and Tuiuiu find inappropriate, whistle at strange women in the street, don't offer the only available seats on the bus to the girls, refuse to watch a movie with that *horroroso* Brad Pitt, and add pepper to the girls' ice cream as a practical joke.⁶ Frustrated, Boneca and Tuiuiu say good-bye to the boys, commenting that they hope Saci and Tininim will forgive them for "o que nós fizemos com eles" (what we did to them; 17).

When Saci and Tininim next greet the girls with a high level of chivalry, the reader learns that the rude boys who took Boneca and Tuiuiu to the city and mistreated them were actually Saci and Tininim in disguise. To reveal the vengeance the boys sought on Rufino and Flecha-Firme for having inscribed their names on the girls' knives in the banana tree, they are shown stripped naked and tied to trees in the forest, with teltrale goose eggs rising from their bruised heads. The girls, moved by Saci and Tininim's relative gallantry, remain unaware that they have been fooled into confirming their affections. To the young reader, this story demonstrates the necessity of manipulation in the process of courtship:

The female's devotion must be tested by trickery. Moreover, her tastes are predictable and thus easy to manipulate: She is appalled by rude behavior and easily won over by the slightest touch of *elegância*.

A Turma do Pererê often poked fun at social concepts that were in vogue during its publication. The story "As Rainhas do Lar" (Pinto 1975) creates and then inverts a distinct portrait of femininity. Boneca and Tuiuiu approach Saci and Tininim, who are playing a game of marbles, to invite them to "brincar de casinha" (play house). They refuse, but their rivals Rufino and Flecha-Firme accept, which Saci and Tininim see as a form of betrayal that takes on proportions of ethnic treason. In one of the sole direct references to race in the comic's text, Saci exclaims, "um descendente direto de Pai João fazendo uma coisa dessas! Que vergonha pra classe!" (a direct descendant of Pai João doing something like this! What a shame for the class!), to which Tininim adds, "Um bravo guerreiro da tribo dos Txukaratoas! Ah . . . isso é de enterrar o coração no joelho do rio!" (A brave warrior from the Txukaratoa tribe! Oh . . . that's the last straw!). Saci's mention of *Pai João* refers to the iconic figure of the old black man who is known for his storytelling, similar to Uncle Remus in American culture or Tio Barnabé in Monteiro Lobato's children's books, whereas the Txukaratoa tribe is the fictional indigenous group to which Flecha-Firme belongs. For Saci and Tininim, their rivals' ethnic masculinity is being threatened by their willingness to participate in a girls' game. They view Rufino and Flecha-Firme's allegiance to their racial groups to be of the highest importance, but this does not keep it from being vulnerable to harm from what could be construed as feminine behavior.

Spying from behind some bushes, Saci and Tininim discover their rivals Flecha-Firme and Rufino reclining in hammocks between the trees as the girls offer them sweets. Envious, Tininim and Saci return to their game of marbles, which they refer to as "nosso joguinho digno" (our dignified little game) that is only played by "homem que é homem" (real men; 62). Saci and Tininim later rationalize visiting the girls, after originally rejecting them with the explanation that domestic tasks are implicit in the girls' true nature and that they can only be satisfied by the presence of a male whom they can care for and wait on. Here, their femininity becomes defined by the preparation and serving of food, specifically in the form of traditional and decadent sweets. In letting the girls wait on them, the boys are making them feel happy and useful. From the boys' perspective, "a gente tem que reconhecer que elas são úteis . . . devemos dar uma alegria pra elas" (we have to acknowledge that they are useful . . . we should make them happy; 64). This usefulness is the essence of femininity, and its recognition by male characters is portrayed as the ultimate female satisfaction.

In the morning, Saci and Tininim awake from a night of sleep during which Tininim has dreamed of "a carinha da Tuiuiu, ali, me servindo" (Tuiuiu's face,

there, waiting on me; 64). They are greeted by an anonymous maternal figure (only her arms appear in the frame) who tells them that the girls have ordered them to start their chores, washing dishes and sweeping the house, because they are very tired. According to the disembodied maternal voice, the girls went to sleep late at night, having stayed up to read the books that Tia Rosa had sent from Rio. The final frame of the story shows the girls sprawled in bed with smiles on their sleeping faces, apparently having fallen asleep while reading tomes titled *A Libertação Feminina* (Female Liberation) and *O Poder da Mulher* (Women's Power).

Here, the female characters are awoken from an image of a femininity that is defined by domestic bliss through the introduction of new categories of social thought. Significantly, these new ideas come from the city, by way of the books sent by a female family member, and save the girls from being taken advantage of by the boys for their "natural" feminine talents of domesticity. Saci and Tininim, in turn, lose out as a result of the girls' overnight transformation, deprived of the sensual pleasure of being served food by pretty and docile members of the opposite sex. The balance of power has shifted due to the introduction of new and modernizing ideas, giving the females the upper hand.

Gendered Ambiguity and Contradiction

Many of the ideas about gender expressed in *A Turma do Pererê* are innately contradictory. The result is an ambiguous portrait of male/female relations that may have influenced the ways in which young readers framed gender roles in their own lives. The plot in "Reforma Geral" (Pinto 1991) revolves around the female as an instigator of change in a romantic relationship but also expresses the fickleness of female attention. Modernity is portrayed as feminine and inherently negative, in contrast to a positive depiction of authenticity and tradition as masculine values.

The story opens with several frames that show Tininim going about the business of an indigenous boy in the jungle: bellowing while swinging from vines in his loincloth and necklace of shells, hiding in the bushes, and doing a victory dance after using his bow and arrow to spear a ripe mango from a tall tree. Tuiuiu scolds him for being rude and primitive, "parecendo um selvagem" (acting like a savage). When Tininim insists that he likes being an *índio*, Tuiuiu responds that she will leave him if he doesn't go along with her plans. He is dragged off to the city, where he is outfitted in a suit, tie, and shoes. Pictured with his arms piled high with packages, he inverts a common saying: "Fazer compras! Ah, que programa de índio!" (Go shopping! What a drag!).⁷

With his hair shaped into a crew cut, he is rewarded for his sacrifice with affection from his companion, who informs him that the next step is English

classes so that he can learn to say "I love you, Tuiuiu!" Meanwhile, back in Mata do Fundão, a group of ecologists has arrived to shoot a documentary, marked as *gringos* by their exaggerated accents and relatively tall physical stature. Saci, enthusiastic about the arrival of the "defensores da natureza" (defenders of nature), recommends Tininim as the *índio* they are seeking to star in the film. Arriving dressed in a sweatsuit emblazoned with the phrase "I ♥ NY," he is presented by Saci as "o índio mais puro, mais autêntico, mais perfeito das selvas do Brasil" (the purest, most authentic, most perfect Indian from the Brazilian jungle) but is quickly rejected by the *gringos* when he greets them in English. The *gringos* ultimately choose Flecha-Firme, Tininim's rival who is still portrayed as an "authentic" indigenous figure, to appear in their film, at which point Flecha-Firme is also chosen by Tuiuiu because of his star power.

Initially, Tininim is portrayed as the ultimate expression of indigenous authenticity, occupying a natural space that is unpolluted by outside forces. In the first two pages of the story, he is the sole human figure in a natural world made up primarily of vegetation. The symbolic proof of his affections for Tuiuiu lies in the presentation of the mango. By contrast, Tuiuiu represents a modernity that fundamentally disapproves of the authentic as embodied by the primitive. Due to her indigenous background, she occupies a transitional space en route to a modern identity as she adopts contemporary dress and expresses disdain for Tininim's activities as "savage."

The visiting ecologists stereotype the image of the foreigner in Brazil as one particularly preoccupied with the portrayal of a form of pure authenticity that decidedly does not include English-speaking Indians in American-style track-suits. They wish to capture the innocence they imagine on film, a medium that has contributed to the globalization of Western values, without showing the negative side effects that Westernization has produced. The chance to appear in the film is depicted as a positive opportunity for the indigenous boys, above all for its assurance of the female attention that will follow. In the end, Tuiuiu is more attracted to an *artista de cinema* than to her newly made-over version of Tininim, despite the fact that Flecha-Firme has landed in the movie precisely due to his unmodified "savage" nature. The fickle role of femininity is emphasized here, as Tuiuiu rejects authenticity in favor of the city when it holds the promise of social ascent and then embraces it when it can be used as a pathway to globalized culture. In "Reforma Geral," Tininim can be seen as the essential embodiment of development-era Brazilianness, manipulated into abandoning his authentic and traditional nature in exchange for the flash of modernity, only to be punished after going through this self-transformation.

If gender is a cultural construction, it follows that it is continually shaped and influenced by that culture. Ziraldo's depiction of femininity is a reflection of his own contextual understanding of gender roles. The ambiguity of the

approach to gender in early 1960s Brazil is illustrated in *A Turma do Pererê*, which alternately endorses and satirizes traditional values in a reflection of the broad questioning of gender roles and identities that was taking place at the time. The influence of the atmosphere of ambiguity toward gender during the period is revealed in the side-by-side promotion of feminine values of traditional domesticity and contemporary independence. The use of physical appearance to attract male attention is portrayed as a primary feminine trait, yet the female characters also put their powers of manipulation to use in their relationships with the opposite sex. The stories of *A Turma do Pererê* can be seen as "inocentes manuais de comportamento" (innocent handbooks of proper behavior; Santos 2004, 23), training and educating children in the period's simultaneous acceptance and questioning of traditional gender roles.

Notes

1. All translations are mine.
2. The character in the comic is named Saci, but the (lowercase) term *saci pererê* in Brazilian popular culture usually refers to a category of fantastical beings, such as fairies or gnomes.
3. *O Saci-Pererê: Um Inquérito* was originally published anonymously but later attributed to Monteiro Lobato (1977).
4. Many connections can be drawn between the comic and the tales of Brer Rabbit from North American folklore, in which the Tar Baby plays a prominent role. While outside the scope of the current project, these connections merit further research.
5. Advertisements for each of these publications appeared in issues of the 1975–76 printings of *A Turma do Pererê*.
6. The popular culture reference embedded in the story was updated in the 2007 republication. In the 1976 printing, the boys resisted seeing a movie with "aquele horroroso Paul Newman" (that horrible Paul Newman; Pinto 1976, 3–11).
7. A "programa de índio" generally refers to an activity that is related to the natural world, but the expression has evolved to signify any unsophisticated or uncomfortable plan or activity.

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PART IV

Heroes, Antiheroes, and the Myth of Power



GENDER, EMPIRE, AND POSTCOLONY
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