



Xuxa: The Mega-Marketing of Gender, Race, and Modernity

Amelia Simpson

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Former Playboy centerfold and soft-porn movie actress Xuxa (SHOO-sha) emerged in the 1980s as Brazil's mass media megastar. Through her children's television show, which reaches millions of people in Latin America and the United States, this blond sex symbol has attained extraordinary cultural authority. Reaching far beyond younger audiences, Xuxa's show informs the culture at large about gender relations, racial democracy, and idealized beauty. Backed by Brazil's TV Globo, the fourth-largest commercial network in the world, Xuxa has built an empire. Amelia Simpson's colorful portrayal is the first book to explore how Xuxa's representation of femininity, her privileging of a white ideal of beauty, and her promotional approach to culture perpetuate inequality on an unprecedented scale. Simpson's thoughtful analysis exposes the complicity of a mass audience eager to celebrate Xuxa's deeply compromised representations of gender, race, and modernity. "Xuxa" also explores the meaning behind the myth Xuxa's long-term relationship with Brazil's soccer idol, Pele, and the near-worship of her atypical blond, blue-eyed appearance by Brazil's population. As the author examines Xuxa's suggestive style juxtaposed with juvenile entertainment, and the phenomenon of Xuxa-look-alike teenaged paquitas, she unfolds the symbolic territory of blond sex symbols worldwide. Amelia Simpson teaches in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at the University of Florida. She recently edited and translated "New Tales of Mystery" and "Crime from Latin America" (1992).

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