

## SEU LUNGA: a character in the transit between real life and *cordel* brochures

*SEU LUNGA*: um personagem no trânsito entre uma vida real e os folhetos de *cordel*  
*SEU LUNGA*: Un personaje en el tránsito entre la vida real y los *folhetos de cordel*

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### ABSTRACT

This article discusses the story of Seu Lunga in the *cordel* "The stories of Seu Lunga: the most angry man in the world", written by Abraão Batista, the first poet to publish about the character. We understand *cordel* as a narrative communicational phenomenon of everyday records. We observe, through analysis based on the social construction of reality, disputes over meanings in the *cordel* about Seu Lunga, constituting a character as believable as mythical, using narrative strategies of effects of realness. We conclude that, by becoming a character, through the meanings that his name summons, Seu Lunga acquires permanence in the collective memory.

**KEYWORDS:** Seu Lunga; Abraão Batista; Character; *Cordel*; Communication.

### Introduction

The present work takes up Seu Lunga's story on *cordel* literature. A real man who had his life exposed and changed from the moment he became a character in pamphlets. This is an adaptation of the dissertation defended in 2014 by this author in the Postgraduate Program in Media Studies, at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte, entitled "Cordel brochures between reality and everyday fiction: a study of the media in the construction of the Seu Lunga character".

We aim to bring *cordel* to the center of the debate in Communications, pointing to paths that go beyond the already established axes such as journalism, advertising and organizational communication. *Cordel* is a space of narratives that reverberate beyond its verses, as we can see when we think about the construction of Seu Lunga as a publicly recognized character in Ceará, where pamphlets circulated more strongly.

Therefore, we analyze the Seu Lunga character's social construction in the *cordel* pamphlets "The stories of Seu Lunga: the most angry man in the world", written by Abraão Batista, the first poet to publish about him – and later followed by many others,

that we cannot encompass. Our purpose is to observe how, in the emergence of meanings of realness, the *cordel* about Seu Lunga constitutes a character as believable as it is mythical, thus creating a cultural imaginary that places him in dimensions that are not very easy to be apprehended.

Is Seu Lunga real or fictional? We do not intend to answer this question, but we must summon it in our analysis – which is based on the proposals of Social Construction of Reality from symbolic universes, by Berger and Luckmann (1985) – in order to glimpse the cognitive spaces through which the character moves on *cordel* literature, using narrative strategies that create effects of realness, and that carries a permanent dispute: is what is said about Seu Lunga in the pamphlets 'true' or not? Seu Lunga: who was he?

Joaquim dos Santos Rodrigues was Seu Lunga's given name. A man who lived until the end of his life, in November 2014, in Juazeiro do Norte, in Cariri Cearense, 516 km from Fortaleza. He owned a scrapyards that operated downtown and sold a wide variety of objects that were confusing in the visitors' eyes who were unaware of that space organization. Seu Lunga was known for a peculiar behavior: that of responding rudely to his interlocutors.

It evidenced simplicity. He dressed like a countryman is recognizable: a button-down shirt, cloth pants, sandals and a hat to protect himself from the sun. He worked daily in the scrapyards, where he had no employees. He was a devotee of Father Cícero, as suggested by the strong religiosity of the Juazeiro do Norte city. The features of the face showed an air of tiredness and little patience. His speeches showed us certain intolerance for what diverged from his thoughts. Ideas that seemed fixed and with few possibilities of changing. He was interested in politics (he had already been a candidate for councilor in Juazeiro do Norte) and in poetry (he recited his verses to anyone who asked).

But none of these characteristics was considered as striking as its rudeness. Seu Joaquim became known as the man with impatient answers. Gradually, the stories of his dialogues that took place in the scrapyards began to take the form of jokes and spread. Someone who lived through the situation would tell someone else, who would pass the story on to another group and the stories would potentially spread. Each story told by the interlocutor's subjectivity, adapting the facts according to his memory and obeying an anecdote format, including or removing elements that he deems interesting and acting as eyewitness, telling what they saw or what heard of. The reference of reality was built by each mediator who spread the rudeness aspect of Seu Joaquim.

The subjects' creativity is not restricted to the speeches produced by Seu Joaquim and their adaptations. The rudeness of the answers was spreading through the rumors

and, little by little, stories of dialogues with unexpected answers started to be attributed to Seu Lunga. "There is not much richness of arguments or an intricate linguistic challenge: it is about to build a context, to formulate a question that can provoke your irascible genius and foresee the answer" (CARVALHO, 2006, p. 82). He became a synecdoche, that is, a subject who aggregated the imaginary of various acts that he had not necessarily performed, of rude behavior, of impatient responses, which, in order to be protected as real, needed a subject to perform them.

Thus, Seu Joaquim, that simple man from a scrapyard, suddenly starts to be treated as a comic character, the protagonist of stories of naive questions and intolerant answers, Seu Lunga. According to Carvalho (2006), his image was shaped and crystallized by the people. The real man then became a caricature, a representation that remains constantly transmitted and retransmitted when the subject is "ignorance".

In Brazilian Northeast, the word "ignorance", by common sense, refers to rudeness, hardly to its formal meaning, which means ignorance of a certain situation or subject. Thus, this adjective is commonly used to classify Seu Lunga, including placing him as "the most ignorant man in the world". For the same reason, a metaphor was created that names "Seu Lunga" every person who brings marks of rudeness in his speech.

The character Seu Lunga is a caricature of the man we met in downtown Juazeiro do Norte. Initially, talking about Seu Lunga could refer to his self, but little by little, as a metaphor, it acquired its own characteristics - although some of them remain with reference to the subject of everyday reality. He becomes a legend of the collective imagination in the Cariri region of Ceará, a local curiosity, a distinctive feature of the city where he lives, a representative symbol of Juazeiro do Norte. Those who went to the city for tours, events, pilgrimages, needed to take the time to get to know the figure of Seu Lunga.

Local character who then starts to be mediatized. *Cordel*, as a record of everyday history, as a media that presents events close to the people who produce and consume it, begins to record what people tell about the man who became important, who became a highlight of the local culture. A man who, even after death, has his social representation for being part of the collective of meanings that the city of Juazeiro do Norte has.

Seu Lunga was an individual whose life was confused between the public and the private, whose actions were confused between the collective interest and the media representation, who constantly moved between real and imaginary. The Seu Lunga of the *cordel* analyzed here is a caricature. Considered superlatively by poets, for the exaggeration of a defining characteristic: the angriest man in the world, the most ignorant man in the world. We analyze the construction of Seu Lunga as a character in

pamphlets, who transits and is confused between reality and representation, an ambiguous character whose daily life is transfigured into fiction. This is the man we propose to recognize here.

### The character development

Seu Lunga is treated here as a character. A whole scenario is created around its representations, which constitute him as the main element of a comic narrative and which is consolidated in the collective imagination from the media constructions, whether in pamphlets, where it has more strength, whether on television or in magazines, which allow Seu Lunga to be transported from Juazeiro do Norte to all of Brazil.

In a narration, the character is the one who drives the actions. It is in him that the conductive threads of the told stories are concentrated. Character, according to Rosenfeld (2011), constitutes fiction. Brait's (2006) concept also frames the character within the scope of fiction and defines it as "being composed by the poet based on a selection of what reality offers him, whose nature and unity can only be achieved from the resources used for creation" (BRAIT, 2006, p. 31). In this work, we consider the authors' definitions, but we expand the character's comprehension to other narrative forms that go beyond fiction. We have characters in journalistic texts, in historical accounts, in *cordel* pamphlets. Here, we understand that character is the discursive representation of an anthropomorphized conductor of the constituent actions of a narrative.

This will show many gestures, random masks, false gestures and unexpected acts due to the volitional-emotional responses and the whims of the author's soul; through the chaos of such responses, it will have to become fully acquainted with its true axiological directive, until its face is finally built into a stable and necessary whole. (BAKHTIN, 2011, p. 4)

Thus, Seu Lunga, who is not exactly a fictional character, but who permeates the creative and imaginative activities of *cordel* poets and who has a referent in everyday reality, albeit with distorted characteristics, is also considered a character and is treated as such on here. According to Bakhtin (2011), the author experiences his character, and the essentially creative attitude is to attribute images to him.

We understand Seu Lunga as a character, because here we refer to the actor in the stories told in the pamphlets, regardless of the discussion that is established between the poets and Seu Joaquim about the veracity of those stories, as an image built from the speeches of the poets that versify and print other discourses that already circulated

around him, inserting imaginative elements that become quotidian through language and creating new fables.

Here we discuss the role of the character in *cordel*, analyzing the narrative in the context of reality construction through fields of signification, interpreting the transience of this character in the verses. Our focus is not on Seu Joaquim, but on the created speech and, therefore, on the character he becomes when he becomes an element of the narrative. We think about how reality and creation are combined in the character composition.

According to Bakhtin (2011), "the characters created are disconnected from the process that created them and begin to lead an autonomous life in the world". So it is with Seu Lunga, whose circulation goes beyond the boundaries of the pamphlet. The uses, the metaphorical attributions of his name as an adjective and the creations attributed to him suggest that the images built around the character and its meanings go beyond what is described in the brochures.

It escapes from the pages of pamphlets and becomes quotidian, lived. Often, because it is a creation of the authors, the characters are confused with their creators and cause conflicts pointed out by Bakhtin (2011): when the character takes control of the author; when the author takes possession of the character giving him conclusive elements; and in case the character is the author of himself. In some moments, the character Seu Lunga takes turns in those, when its characteristics are completely attributed by the poets, but, at the same time, there is a referent that is external to the poet, the pamphlet and the character, on which the known assessments are carried out.

Here's what makes Seu Lunga of the pamphlets a character: Rosenfeld (2011) considers that "our view of reality in general, and of individual human beings in particular, is extremely fragmentary and limited" (p. 32), while the characters are accessible in all its essence, at least, in all the essence that the author intends to present for the realization of the narrative actions, whatever their intentions. In the almost psychoanalytical impossibility of accessing the Seu Lunga's consciousness (and everything that involves it), we refer to him from a more evident characteristic. And that single feature is presented as the whole.

Thus, we have a specific access to Seu Lunga's narrated consciousness. Therefore, there is a feeling of full knowledge about all the character's essence, an idea of omniscience within the narrative on the part of the author, but also on the part of readers/listeners who feel in a position to assume the type of answer that would be given by Seu Lunga in certain situations. However, Seu Joaquim has several characteristics in

his personality that cannot be fully described, the brochures open up the possibility of imagination.

Rosenfeld (2011) says that the creation of characters is located in undetermined areas, which stick to elements that do not need to be given or described. These zones would represent what was not objectified in the form of language, but are constituted as mental images, resulted precisely from the limitation of the narratives' sentences, in the possibility of imagination flourishes.

The characters, then, are more "coherent" than real people, with fewer contradictions. Seu Lunga is only understood within a context of rudeness. The author decides the direction of his character, selecting situations and physical and behavioral appearances that deserve attention, making the characters, according to Rosenfeld (2011), purely transparent human beings in our view, in epistemological terms.

Sometimes it's hard to put yourself out of life's happening companion and out of the enemy; both being situated within the character and axiologically beside and against her deforms the vision even with palely complementary and conclusive elements; in these cases the values of life are superior to their bearer. The author experiences the character's life in axiological categories that are entirely different from those in which he experiences his own life and the lives of other people. (BAKHTIN, 2011, p. 13)

This construction of a representation is called by Bakhtin (2011) as a surplus of the aesthetic vision, considering them as creations, as they are limited knowledge about the other. The authors will never fully know Seu Lunga's essence, subjectivity and consciousness, neither intend to. His representation as a character is built from contemplative activities, which allow creativity. External images are experienced only by readers, and they have the feeling of fully apprehending the character, because his caricatures are presented as if they represented his entirety.

The author's consciousness involves his character's consciousness and world, knowing everything that defines him, what he knows, what he feels, even sensations that are inaccessible to the characters themselves. "The way I experience the self of the other differs entirely from the way I experience my own self" (BAKHTIN, 2011, p. 35). The character's statements about himself are actually the author's statements about the character's consciousness, they are representations. The other we perceive is not the real other. Its integrity is inaccessible, and we can only have access to what is built about it.

Wood (2012) considers that we know the characters from the way they are presented to us by the authors, which is sometimes how other characters see it. We know the characters through what Bakhtin calls "aesthetic vision surplus", that is, our

interpretation of the characters is built by what the authors build about them. In the case of Seu Lunga, several authors build it. Collectively, albeit independently. Each one with their speeches builds elements of a common character.

Thus, the creative activity that generates Seu Lunga's image cannot be individually considered, since each poet, as well as each oral narrator, inserts elements in this character to which we have access. Seu Lunga is the result of a series of dialogues that compose new discourses, as suggested by Bakhtin's (2011) dialogism. It is from the dialogues that the imaginary is constituted in its broadest sense, and in the case of Seu Lunga character construction, these dialogues can be identified and analyzed from the pamphlets discourses.

In each story told about Seu Lunga, new elements resulting from the actions are constructive elements of the characters. Each Seu Lunga character of each poet is a different character and contributes with traits to create the image of Seu Lunga that is striking in northeastern imaginations.

Because he is a character, Seu Lunga does not arise by his own existence forces, but there is an inspiration in a man who also configures himself as an author, when he creates personality traits. We are referring here to the authorship of the poets, which stems from the orality that is inspired by the first author, who is Seu Lunga himself in his daily experiences. But the character configuration as such is in the "participatory understanding and the completion of the event in its life by a spectator in cognoscente reality and ethically alien" (BAKHTIN, 2011, p. 13), that is, in the image that emerges as a phenomenon aesthetic<sup>1</sup>.

A character is developed by its described characteristics and those apprehended by the actions. For Bakhtin (2011), it is necessary to extract the biographical material from the works and analyze the way events are treated, so that the character can be understood. In the creative activity, what is produced is not necessarily related to the author's biographical writing in the character, nor is it directly related to the ontological relations established between it and the author, but "there is usually a reformulation of thought so that it corresponds to the character as a whole" (BAKHTIN, 2011, p. 9), which is composed of physical characteristics described in the form of an image, worldviews, habits and actions developed during the narrative.

Seu Lunga is described in the pamphlets, adjectives are given, his personality is valued, but the strength of his characterization is in the actions that are repeated: trivial

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<sup>1</sup> A discussion on the concepts of "aesthetics" does not fit in this text. However, we point out that, here, aesthetics is referred to as a set of meanings that emerge from the reception of artistic and media contents.

questions or comments that receive rude answers. According to Bakhtin (2011), the character's semantic whole can only acquire meaning in this set of descriptive traits and actions. Through the act, a concrete signification is realized, which depends on ends and means, not just determinations of the characters.

Brait (2006) classifies this type of character as flat, that is, "defined in a few words, they are immune to evolution in the course of the narrative, so that their actions only confirm the impression of static characters, not reserving any surprises for the reader" (BRAIT, 2006, p. 41). Flat characters can be subdivided into types, which are peculiar, but not deformed, and caricatures, when a single characteristic is taken to the extreme, causing distortion and, according to Brait (2006), usually in the service of satire. Seu Lunga is a caricature in which only rudeness is highlighted in his actions, being distorted to the point of representing unbelievable situations or aggression against himself.

In the *cordel* verses, it is always rudeness traits that are reported. Although some poets highlight other characteristics when they start the pamphlets, the actions performed by the character always have the same form, follow similar structures and the content refers to the same constitutive trait, which is that of aggressive responses.

A dish of hot soup  
Seu Lunga was eating  
A friend asks him:  
What are you doing?  
Answer: I'm bathing!  
In the body turning  
That boiling soup<sup>2</sup>

Classifying Seu Lunga as a flat character does not mean considering him less alive, or that it places him in a field of signification far removed from everyday reality. There is no hierarchy between character types. "I have to admit that many so-called flat characters seem to me more alive and more interesting as a human study, no matter how ephemeral they are, than round characters to which they are supposedly subordinate" (WOOD, 2012, p. 94). Instead, fixating on a characteristic and taking a single perspective indicate the complexity of the character as a whole, which the author will not be able to account for. A caricature is thus made, highlighting an element only to represent this whole, after all, it is the man's caricature that built the character sold in *cordel* pamphlets.

Seu Lunga described in the verses is the personification, the representation of an idea. A signification that refers to a real man and at the same time creates another, creates several, with stereotyped characteristics, which vary in the pamphlets only in

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<sup>2</sup> Rouxinol do Rinaré, p. 11.

some details, but maintain the formats of realities construction that are reflected in everyday life, in speeches, in interpreters, which are formed by the readings of the verses.

In the *cordel's* development, the character Seu Lunga is fundamental, as the jokes are centered on his protagonist's actions. He interacts with other interlocutors, but they are not the same in every anecdote. Some even appear more than once, as in the case of Seu Lunga's wife, but she is not described or given characteristics, she just undergoes the actions.

During his lifetime, Seu Lunga considered those pamphlets an offense, stating that the stories did not represent reality. The name of the character that "coincides" with his own and the stories of rudeness referred to insulting behaviors that he himself assumed to have, with the justification of demanding linguistic denotation in the questions asked. From a character, Seu Lunga also becomes a metaphor, as mentioned earlier.

This debate over the veracity of the stories about Seu Lunga continued until the end of his life. Countless pamphlets began arguing that they dealt with "real" cases that the poets themselves would have seen and heard. When Seu Lunga denied the stories, it appeared as a defense of his own image, which he didn't want to be made of mockery or jokes. But the character transcended his and the poets' wills and the dispute further sharpened the readers' curiosity about this curious, caricatured man.

Even so, Seu Lunga maintained behaviors that placed metaphor and referent in the same body. "Looking through this canvas of the soul of the other, reduced in half, I live and incorporate my external image to the plastic-pictorial world" (BAKHTIN, 2011, p. 29). Character and individual were confused and mixed all the time, because Seu Lunga himself sometimes incorporated the actions that are, to this day, reproduced in the pamphlets and which he criticized, but did not deconstruct.

The poets who wrote pamphlets about Seu Lunga interviewed in this research, in the context of the dissertation, consider imagination/creativity as starting points for the composition of verses and admit inspiration in Seu Lunga's actions for the creation of his characters. Seu Lunga is an invention based on everyday reality. It is attributed to him characteristics and actions that can originate both in other individuals and in the creativity of poets – who are free to build those who will lead the actions of their verses.

Seu Lunga is placed in imaginaries and in everyday reality, and we can identify him in the brochures, which materialize this creative imaginary. Considering him as a character is related to the narrative form that constitutes him, much more than to ontological representations. Therefore, we do not consider that the character is only related to the field of fiction. The narrative forms, which we understand as constructions

of realities in various fields of signification, have characters that lead the actions and have their own characteristics, created or represented by the authors.

That said, we carry on an analysis of the first two *cordel* about Seu Lunga published by Abraão Batista: "The stories of Seu Lunga: the most angry man in the world", volumes 1 and 2. These were the first titles that feature Seu Lunga as a character, in 1987. In view of the disputes of meaning already identified around Seu Lunga, what are the cognitive spaces, measured by the finite fields of signification, through which the character transits on the Abraão's *cordel*?

### **Abraham Baptist: "I thought Seu Lunga deserved a *cordel*... I wrote... And I published it... and it worked!"**

Abraão Batista is a *cordelista* poet and retired teacher. He lives in Juazeiro do Norte, the same city where Seu Lunga lived and worked. The geographic proximity made it easier for Seu Lunga to access Abraão Batista's verses at the time of their publication. The reaction since the first moment was always rejection. Seu Lunga accused Abraham Batista of "making up stories" about him. Abraão was also the only *cordelista* who wrote about the character to be sued and claims that the stories he publishes are not lies, but as it is common in *cordel* pamphlets, he combines reality and imagination.

According to Abraão Batista, the creative inspiration for verses about Seu Lunga comes from the oral stories people used to tell. Stories that the interlocutors insist on claiming to be 'true', because it happened to them or someone close to them, which conveys an idea of trust in the person reporting. In Juazeiro do Norte, it is very common to find people who claim to have lived comic situations in relation to Seu Lunga's rudeness, and this is what the poet uses to create his verses. Seu Lunga is part, not only of the collective imagination, but also of an everyday reality in which the poet and his audience are inserted.

I always do this for marketing: I leave a *cordel* in sight. Then, the fellow on the way said, "Abraão, that's true! Seu Lunga, the angriest man in the world, that's true! This week I went there... I have a fan, imported, English, and it malfunctioned due to use, and I went after a piece, a screw. And Seu Lunga found the piece and already had it on the counter. Two of Lunga's friends arrived, and he left me waiting and went to talk to his friends, with great joy. And time passes... Then I stayed... And I said: Mr Lunga, I'm in a hurry, I arrived first! And he said, 'If you were in a hurry, you would have arrived here yesterday!' Isn't that funny? Then I stopped the car and wrote it down! (...) Then I wrote down and published the second volume. It has our elements that go from the imaginary to the real and from the real to the imaginary. And it ends up having more strength than the real thing. It's Seu Lunga, that's it. I explain on the *cordel*: there are 'one hundred percent true' stories there,

and some stories the people recreated, increased, invented. (...) I'm careful not to run away from the real and the imaginary. You have to add reality with the imagination, forming a delicious salad. Because the *cordel* has to speak about the people, the face of the people, the way of the people. If not, it won't have popular acceptance. (ABRAÃO BATISTA, Entrevista, 2012)

And he describes the character:

First of all, Seu Lunga is a typical one, he is the phenotype of the farmer, an agricultural man who came to live in the city. He is from Caririaçu. It is a vision of the man, that man, that farmer, that descendant of black and Portuguese, European and Indian. A man, many times, full of tradition, prejudice, that the woman must be submissive. And the man, I don't know what, and he must cut his hair, he is horrified of hairy men! (...) So Seu Lunga is a normal man. A man who inherited that damned legacy of prejudice from the Europeans. (...) A guy who experiences contemporary society, though, taking with him his past heritage. (ABRAÃO BATISTA, Entrevista, 2012)

According to the poet, the results are positive and he is very happy that his brochures have a great reach. "I learned that on a cruise that was going to Japan this *cordel* was read with laughter." And, from the printing of the brochures, the history of the man from Juazeiro do Norte can reach different places. The verses expanded the possibility of reception, even generating new oral reports, now about the verses read. "His behavior is on everyone's lips", says the poet.

And this repercussion would have been, in the poet's opinion, the reason that led Seu Lunga to sue him. But his stories about Seu Lunga also gave rise to the inspiration of other poets, who, according to Abraão Batista, started to write mean stories about the character that detract from his image, using profanity and describing situations that would be embarrassing to Seu Lunga. According to the poet, his verses are not offensive to the image of Seu Lunga.

I'm not a liar, Seu Lunga, I'm a storyteller, who records the story of Seu Lunga, the character Seu Lunga. (...) I don't have a character, my character is reality, it's the imaginary I see. I don't create character. (...) I didn't create Seu Lunga, he is already created. I didn't invent Seu Lunga's story, it was already invented, it already existed, it exists. (ABRAÃO BATISTA, Entrevista, 2012)

In the context of Seu Lunga's death, numerous other pamphlets were published. Abraão Batista also paid his "homage" in verse to the man-character he helped build. Verses that were published in December 2014, a month after Seu Joaquim's death, as is common to be done in *cordel*.

Abraham's pamphlet pays homage to Seu Lunga, recalling events in his life and justifying the reason for attributing this behavior to him. As in an account of the poet who wrote stories about Seu Lunga in two volumes, Abraão talks about his respect and mourns the death of Seu Joaquim, the man who inspires the character. (CARVALHO, 2017, p. 265)

Abraão's verses point to a public interest in the character's stories, either by telling them or listening to them. This admiration of people makes Seu Lunga an object of curiosity, intriguing and part of a collective imagination. This imagery shows an interest around this character. But, according to the poet, it is necessary to have a "good interpretation", and this is his function, to interpret and tell the stories.

Seu Lunga, there's even more:  
from the people's admiration  
looking for your stories  
join the crowd  
to hear from him news  
with good interpretation.  
(BATISTA, 1987)

Abraão constantly seeks to build real effects in his narrative, summoning verifiable elements of everyday reality to be inserted in the verses. He points out where the stories came from:

I listen since I was a boy  
sung from mouth to mouth  
the stories of Seu Lunga  
funny and very crazy  
because they leave me astonished  
so many times and not a few.  
(BATISTA, 1987)

He refers to Seu Lunga's family:

He is a man who knows  
his own function  
lives established  
married by conviction  
has children already well raised  
and follows religion.  
(BATISTA, 1987)

To his possessions:

He lives very well  
in the middle class adjusted  
has a place, a house on the street,

his money, borrowed  
with good bank credit  
and friend in the market.  
(BATISTA, 1987)

And to dated events, such as Seu Lunga's candidacy for councilor of Juazeiro do Norte, in 1992:

Seu Lunga was a candidate  
And how good a citizen  
had the name commented  
on the farthest block  
at the rally, it was party  
Great joy of the masses.  
(BATISTA, 1987)

Thus, Seu Lunga character doesn't go far from his real referent. But Abraão does not refrain from doing what he calls "interpretation":

Maybe one day we will know  
Why Seu Lunga is like that  
Personally he is treatable  
We can't say, at least  
He's an onomatopoetic being  
presumptuous and very bad

On the contrary, I claim  
He is a working man  
I never talked to him  
But as an observer  
I say he's smart  
And passes *mela* in doctor.  
(BATISTA, 1987)

As mentioned in the interview, the poet shows a certain care in his verses to use terms that are not offensive and that, despite building comic and rude stories, he remains respectful of his character's referent. Seu Lunga by Abraão Batista is respected for two reasons: for his work, and for the respectful relationship that people who also appear in the brochures as characters have with the protagonist.

Seu Lunga of this story  
is a respected man  
has a store that sells  
junkyard  
scraps and screws  
and everything that was used.  
(BATISTA, 1987)

The poet refers to Seu Lunga from everyday reality, who is constantly confused with Seu Lunga as a *cordel* character. The marking between one and the other is not explicit and the effects of reality are always attributed to the author's own gaze, recounting experiences lived or witnessed by other people.

By presenting the fundamental characteristic of his character, Abraão Batista acts as a legitimizer of the reality presented in the pamphlet based on a contextualization and explanation of what he points out.

It turns out that Seu Lunga  
is enemy of stupidity  
of dumb questions  
stupid and foolish people,  
that's why he gets angry  
with any idiocy.

Maybe Seu Lunga has  
a high judgment  
a smart mind  
straight-thinking  
in that case he gets angry  
with questions from the lazy.  
(BATISTA, 1987)

Another real effect brought by Abraão Batista for his character is the use of indirect speech, attributing to Seu Lunga himself an appreciation of the stories with his name.

The other day he said  
he doesn't like to hear  
the stories about him  
that make people smile;  
for history I write  
for you so much insist.  
(BATISTA, 1987)

Another real effect used by Abraão Batista is the reference to the "historical" record when telling stories by Seu Lunga:

*Seu Lunga, I believe  
he is a man of reality,  
very tame and concrete  
in his own city  
his story I approve,  
stays in eternity.*

*His life has become  
an own anecdote  
All the city knows him  
as an imaginary man*

*though made of flesh and blood  
it's tale and inventory  
(BATISTA, 1987)*

Thus, the poet seeks to make a general overview of a collective interest in Seu Lunga, while presenting us with his own look, so that his character is understood as a real, serious man who, despite the comicalness of the stories, should not be disrespected by the readers of the booklet. The speech that is presented as a response to a series of previous dialogues indicates the poet's predictions. Knowing Seu Lunga's relationship with these stories, he imagines his audience will have a mocking reaction to the jokes, so he also introduces the character acknowledging he is also a real man.

In the following verses of the first volume, Abraão Batista reports 35 stories about situations in which the comic element is in Seu Lunga's different reaction of what is conventionally expected. Some cases of questions that receive rude answers, others in which Seu Lunga reacts with actions against himself, as answers to obvious interlocutions.

Seu Lunga's behavior is interpreted as "naughtiness", in other words, something like rudeness resulting from the lack of treat and care for other people. In this context, a person called "naughty" would be someone who does not exercise kindness with others. But in the poet's text, the character's behavior is the result of provocations and inconveniences that people cause him. Seu Lunga's actions would not be a cause, but a consequence.

Now I will start  
counting the naughty  
Seu Lunga's answers  
with the rarest sight  
to answer insults  
or any intrusion.  
(BATISTA, 1987)

Seu Lunga is, therefore, a character who, in the stories, reflects the behavior of many men in a similar status of education, age and cultural background. The stories are a way of sedimenting possible meanings, those that make up the symbolic universe where Seu Lunga is established, where he circulates and how he becomes known.

So to the great Lunga  
Humble I beg your pardon  
If that's why you got angry  
Please, I insist  
But Seu Lunga belongs to the people  
With every imagination.

(BATISTA, 1987)

The use of effects of realness in the construction of Abraão's character is fundamental to his narrative, which, in his own evaluation, registers the history and makes an inventory of it. There is also an ethical issue of respect between men that is called upon in these texts, since all the time Abraão expresses his respect for the man, transforming him into his character. That said, his verses assume a "historical" role, writing everyday life – albeit with little conventional or verifiable methods.

Abraham's verses, when dealing with Seu Lunga, reinforce his existence outside the pages of the pamphlet – which is constantly summoned for its construction. It is common in *cordel* narratives: a speech by poets almost solemnly swearing the veracity of their stories. And this self-referenced aspect around the idea of truth is the axis that articulates the disputes that had drawn out between Abraão Batista and Seu Lunga, until the latter died in 2014.

However, as a character, his material death did not mean the end of his symbolic existence. Seu Lunga remains part of the popular Northeastern imagination, pamphlets with his stories continue to be published and it continues to be a metaphor used to refer to rude people. The Seu Lunga character remains alive.

## Conclusions

The *cordel* written by Abraão Batista and published for the first time in 1987 continued to be edited and officially sold until the poet was sued by Seu Lunga and stopped selling – which did not actually happen. In addition to Abraão, other poets such as Rouxinol do Rinaré, Jotabê, Zé do Jati, José Sindeaux and others continued writing, publishing and declaiming verses that had Seu Lunga as the protagonist. In 2018, when we went to Feira de São Cristóvão, Rio de Janeiro, for another research, we still found pamphlets with "As Novas de Seu Lunga" there. Or at the newsstands in Fortaleza, in Crato, in the Public Market of Juazeiro do Norte. Seu Lunga character is still there on the covers of the brochures, in the recited verses.

Seu Lunga gained visibility when he was transformed into a *cordel* character. It stopped being "just" the real man and, as a character, became a metaphor (RICOEUR, 2005) and took on a life of its own. Another life moved by a mimetic circle (RICOEUR 2012), whose woven intrigue returns to the pre-figured world, opening up other narrative possibilities – but this understanding opens up another proposal for analysis, designed for future projects.

Here the *cordel* appears as a materiality where the narrative about Seu Lunga is organized and from which this narrative overflows. *Cordel* narrates daily life. If we think

about the writing of History from a plural perspective, which considers the traces, the details, the “minor” events, the local proportions, we find in the *cordel* an account of what has been lived. They are “common” characters, “close” people who are narrated in the fusion between the real and the fictional. Poets create documents about the historical present, recording their own views and experiences.

Seu Lunga remains on the *cordel*, remains in memory, remains in history.

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**RESUMO:**

Este artigo discute a história de Seu Lunga nos cordéis "As histórias de Seu Lunga: o homem mais zangado do mundo", escritos por Abraão Batista, o primeiro poeta a publicar sobre o personagem. Entendemos o cordel como um fenômeno narrativo comunicacional de registros do cotidiano. Observamos aqui, em uma análise baseada na construção social da realidade, disputas de sentidos no cordel sobre Seu Lunga, constituindo-se um personagem tão verossímil quanto mítico, a partir da utilização de estratégias narrativas de efeitos de real. Concluímos que, ao virar personagem, pelos sentidos que seu nome convoca, Seu Lunga adquire permanência na memória coletiva.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVES:** Seu Lunga; Abraão Batista; Personagem; Cordel; Comunicação.

**RESUMEN:**

Este artículo analiza la historia de Seu Lunga en las hojas "As historias de Seu Lunga: el hombre más enojado del mundo", escrito por Abraão Batista, el primer poeta en publicar sobre el personaje. Entendemos el cordel como un fenómeno narrativo comunicativo de los registros cotidianos. Observamos aquí, en un análisis basado en la construcción social de la realidad, las disputas de los sentidos en el cordel sobre Seu Lunga, que constituye un personaje tan creíble como mítico, a partir del uso de estrategias narrativas de efectos reales. Concluimos que, al convertirse en un personaje, a través de los sentidos que convoca su nombre, Seu Lunga adquire permanencia en la memoria colectiva.

**PALABRAS-CLAVES:** Seu Lunga; Abraão Batista; Personaje; Cordel; Comunicación.