**A woman who saw the devil.**

**Gender representations in Brazil’s cordel narratives**

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My presentation focuses on the cordel as the idiosyncratic manifestation of Brazilian popular culture. It places the results of the original research of cordel gender representations into specific social, cultural and political contexts within which they came into existence. The underpinnings of the study are grounded in cultural studies and their insistence on the critical importance of race, gender and religion. It is argued that the cordels – poems recorded in cheap booklets with an illustrated cover and marketed to the masses – offer important insights into existing social and gender norms in Brazil. Whereas in the past the genre was monopolised by men authors and upheld conservative Catholic values, nowadays it has creatively adapted to the changing social realities. Comparative analysis of specific titles written in rural Brazil in the second half of the 20th century, and by emerging women authors in the early 21st century in urban setting reveals starkly diverse patterns of gender representation. Contemporary authors – many of them women – are well aware of the cordel’s importance as a tool in the socialisation and apprehension of cultural meanings of gender. They represent gender through the cordel in ways that are subversive and serve to undermine the existing patriarchal normative. The cordel today continues to develop into a genre which is open and pluralistic in its multiple gender representations reflecting Brazil’s diverse social realities.