

Brazil Sends 16 of Its Writers in a World Love-Story Mission

Contributed by Isaura Daniel
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A postcard from Cairo arrives at the house of a youth in São Paulo, in southeastern Brazil. The correspondence is from his identical twin brother, from whom he has not had news for some years. The postcard is the starting push for the youth's trip to Egypt, after his brother, and thus begins the novel written by Brazilian author Joca Reiners Terron.

The story takes place in the Arab country and in São Paulo. The writer spent one month in Cairo, between May and June last year, so that he could set his story there.

The writing of the story is currently in progress. It should be released next year. It is part of project Amores Expressos (Express Loves), which took 17 Brazilian authors to 17 different cities around the world to make them into the backdrop for their novels, all of them love stories, naturally.

São Paulo, Berlin, Buenos Aires, Tokyo, Shanghai, Sydney, Istanbul, Lisbon, Paris, Havana, New York, Prague, Saint Petersburg, Mexico City, Dublin, Mumbai and Cairo were the cities chosen. The elected travellers: experienced Brazilian writers, among them Joca.

Joca was in Cairo accompanied by his wife, Isabel Santana, who is a photographer, and for the thirty nights of his stay he was divided between two hotels in the center of the city. What he brought home were his impressions of the Arab city and notes and drawings in a notebook.

"And then my notebook was stolen," explains the author. However, the planning of the general lines of the novel came to Brazil together with him. Joca wants to complete the novel before the end of this year.

And as Express Loves project asks for love stories, the author, born in the midwestern Brazilian state of Mato Grosso, decided to focus on the fraternal love of the two brothers, identical twins. After receiving the post card, one of them travels to Cairo to find the other.

The first moved to the Arab country years earlier, anxious to find his own identity and moved by his passion for movie Cleopatra. The brother on the quest is the one that the uterus did not feed adequately, so he is more peaceful. The brother who ran away is the most developed.

"There is a German belief that says that the meeting of look-alikes is the beginning of doom," explained the author, giving clues about the meeting of the two brothers. Similar to the runaway brother's obsession with Cleopatra, the father of the twins is obsessed by the idea of duality.

The most developed son goes to Cairo as he feels he has found his true identity and wants to test it in another country. In the narration, Joca indirectly plans to show some differences between the West and the East.

Before starting to write the novel, Joca did not have much contact with the Arab world. "The Arab Egypt is very unknown," he says. He added that there are many differences between the imagined Egypt and the real one.

The great civilization of the past and the movies, like Cleopatra - which he describes as kitsch, - are, according to Joca, different from the current Cairo. Egypt, according to him, is now much more Arab and Islamic than can be imagined. "It was a great immersion," says Joca about his stay in Cairo.

Apart from being a writer, Joca Reiners Terron is also a graphic designer and editor. He already has six books published. One of them, called Hotel Hell, is a novel. Another two are poetry anthologies, two are of short stories and one is a novella. The short story book Curva de Rio Sujo (Curve of a Dirty River), published in Brazil in 2003 by Planeta publishing house, was also released in Portugal, in 2005.

Joca has lived in São Paulo for 17 years, but he was born in Cuiabá, in the midwestern Brazilian state of Mato Grosso. Currently aged 40, he published his first book ten years ago. He is also writing another work for a cultural project sponsored by Brazilian oil company Petrobras.

Express Loves

The destination of each author in the literary project was determined by the Express Loves production. Part of the project also included scenes of the authors' experiences of 16 authors in the cities, which are becoming documentaries.

The stay of each author should generate one documentary, each with 26 minutes. Four are already ready and the project coordinators are starting to negotiate their broadcasting on television channels.

Project Express Loves Itineraries was thought up by RT Features, belonging to Rodrigo Teixeira. He and Tadeu Jungle, of Academia de Filmes (Film Academy), got together to set up a third company, Ipanema Entertainment, responsible for the project. The documentaries were developed by Ipanema and Film Academy.

These are all the Brazilian writers participating in the Amores Expressos project: Paulo Scott (Sydney), Reinaldo Moraes (Mexico City), Sérgio Sant'anna (Prague), Chico Mattoso (Havana), Luiz Ruffato (Lisbon), Joca Reiners Terron (Cairo). João Paulo Cuenca (Tokyo), Cecilia Gianetti (Berlin), André de Leones (São Paulo), Daniel Pellizzari (Dublin), Antonia

Pellegrino (Mumbai), Bernardo Carvalho (Saint Petersburg), Lourenço Mutarelli (New York) Adriana Lisboa (Paris), Amilcar Bettega (Istambul), Antonio Prata (Shanghai) and Daniel Galera (Buenos Aires).

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