

Brazilian book released in Egypt

Musician and writer Niágara Cruz launched children's book 'Lua de Couro' in Aswan last October. She also taught workshops on Brazilian music.

Isaura Daniel*

São Paulo – Brazil's Niágara Cruz released her children's book *Lua de Couro* (Portuguese for Leather Moon) last month in Egypt. She was in the country to work on a musical project with local Portuguese students. A Rio de Janeiro resident originally from Brazil's Mato Grosso do Sul state, Niágara is a writer and a musician. The book, whose Brazilian release is slated for December, tells the story of a young man lost in the desert.



His name is Lua (Portuguese for moon). Feeling cold, hungry and lonely, he wanders across the desert and comes upon an ox, a smooth-billed ani bird and a calango lizard. Then, he reaches a location packed with people who are all as lost as he is. Here, a few cultural manifestations take place, and it rains. It even rains star-drops. "Magical things happen," says Niágara.

An excerpt from the book reads: *Lua que anda pelo céu e se transforma.../E não é que a lua anda como o povo que procura como viver e se transforma como o povo que precisa sobreviver?/Ela parece feita de couro./Lua de Couro...**.*

The Portuguese-language book is an independent release. Although Egypt's official language is Arabic, there are Portuguese speakers in the country. The Portuguese Language Department at Aswan University, for instance, offers a graduate course on the subject.

Niágara was in Aswan from October 11 to 25. She was invited by the university and by Brazilian journalist Márcia Machado's cultural project *Egito no Brasil* (Egypt



in Brazil). Niágara's activities in the country were organized by Aswan's Portuguese Language Department coordinator Maged ElGebaly and by Márcia Machado.

The Brazilian writer presented her book to children at the Luxor Science school, and to students in the Aswan University Portuguese language course. She also coordinated musical activities with the kids – music is her main line of work – covering Brazilian folk music, samba and nursery rhymes (*cantigas de roda*). She used instruments she built using PET bottles.

Portuguese students in Aswan sat through two workshops with Niágara and then gave a presentation of the contents at the Aswan Cultural Center. They also played, sang and danced to songs like *Cai, cai balão*, *Ciranda da Rosa Vermelha* and *Samba Lelé*. The national anthems of Brazil and Egypt were played, and the PET instruments were used. As soon as she arrived in Egypt, Niágara immersed herself into local culture as she researched the music that's played in the country.



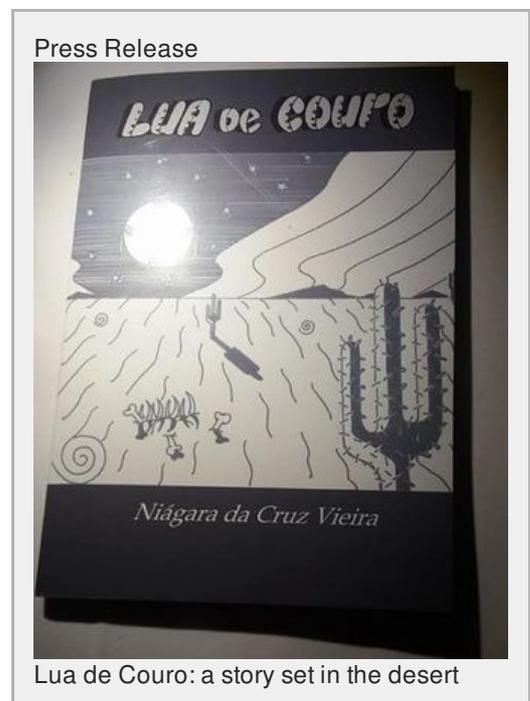
Lua de Couro is the second children's book by Niágara Cruz. The first one, *O Jardim dos Sentidos*, was released some five years ago by publisher Irmãos Vitale. It tells the story of a sad, upset girl who finds a garden as she strolls down the street. Both books include CDs for children learning to read and for visually impaired kids. The CD enclosed in *Lua de Couro* features voiceovers set to music by Gaetano Galifi.

Niágara, of song and language

Despite her inroads into children's literature, Niágara is best known for her musical work. A native of Dourados raised in Campo Grande, she was once in the Mato Grosso do Sul Classical Orchestra. She also taught music lessons in the state before moving to Rio de Janeiro to attend music school Conservatório Brasileiro de Música. She ended up building her career in Rio.

Niágara started out by teaching classes at Colégio Pedro II, a traditional federal public school, under a temporary work contract – she is now a full teacher there. She holds a postgraduate degree in Musical Therapy from Conservatório Brasileiro de Música and a master's in Musicology from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). Niágara also teaches free courses at the Conservatório.

Her past projects include writing and performing music for theater plays, musical selection for dance presentations, workshops on PET instrument-making, album recordings, and musical duos. As soon as she began considering writing children's stories, poet friends of hers encouraged her to get them out there. "I've been teaching kids lessons since I was 14," she says.



Lua de Couro: a story set in the desert

In addition to the soundtrack by Gaetano Galifi, *Lua de Couro* features illustrations by Leandro

Segga, proofreading by Ariadne de Creta, sound editing by Christian Caselli, voices by Alexandre Souza, Crassis Vieira and Ariel Souza, and printing by Polo Printer. The book is available directly from the writer (see details below).

Quick facts:

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**Moon that wanders across the sky and transforms.../And isn't it true that the moon wanders like the people seeking a way to live and transforms like the people who must survive?/It seems made of leather./Leather Moon

***Translated by Gabriel Pomerancblum**

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