

Raul Bopp

B R A Z I L
1898–1984

Raised in the south of Brazil, trained as a lawyer in Recife and Rio, and seasoned as a diplomat in Japan and the United States, Raul Bopp found his true subject in Manaus, where he discovered what he insisted was the authentic Brazil. Bopp brought to the early Modernist movement in Brazil a fascination with the folklore, Indian languages, and culture of the vast hinterland of the Amazon basin. As a contributor to the magazine *Revista de Antropofagia* (*Anthropophagical Review*) in the 1920s and 1930s, Bopp defined the concerns of what he called the “Cannibalist school” of poetry. “Anthropophagical” in their appropriative and assimilative relation to European experimental writing, the theories of Bopp and Oswald de Andrade further associated them with the tenets of the cosmopolitan/indigenist “Verde e Amarelo” writers, who took their name (“The Green and Yellow”) from the colors of the Brazilian flag.

His long poem *Cobra Norato* (*The Snake Norato* or, as translated by Renato Rezende, *Black Snake*) was written in 1928 and published in its first version in 1931. In it Bopp embodies his primitivist, mystical sense of the life of Brazil’s interior, whose energy he and the other “Cannibalists” proposed as an alternative to the compromising forces of modern urban life. Skeptical, impressionistic, rhythmically complex, and erotically playful, the poem moves at times like a dream or a fairy tale. Its politics, however, are humanitarian and ecologically alert to the dangers of exploiting the rain forest and its indigenous cultures. In later editions, Bopp softened the bluntness and difficulty of the poem’s diction, making the tone less austere and more tender. In his later poems, in his criticism, and in his several volumes of memoirs, Bopp continued his Modernist advocacy of Amazonian and Afro-Brazilian folklore as sources of energy and psychic survival.

Cobra Norato

II

Começa agora a floresta cifrada.

A sombra escondeu as árvores.
Sapos beiçudos espiam no escuro.

Aqui um pedaço de mato está de castigo.
Árvorezinhas acocoram-se no charco.
Um fio de água atrasada lambe a lama.

—Eu quero é ver a filha da rainha Luzía.

Agora são os rios afogados
bebendo o caminho.
A água vai chorando afundando afundando.

Lá adiante
a areia guardou os rastros da filha da rainha Luzía!

Black Snake

II

Begins here, the ciphered forest.

The shade is hiding the trees.
Blubber-lipped frogs spy in the dark.

Here a piece of the forest is being punished.
Little trees squat in the pond.
A hurried stream licks the mud.

—I want to see Queen Luzía’s daughter!

Now drowned rivers
drink the road.
The water goes crying, sinking and sinking.

Far ahead
the sand held the tracks of Queen Luzía’s daughter.

—Agora sim
vou ver a filha da rainha Luzía.

Mas antes tem que passar por sete portas
Ver sete mulheres brancas de ventres despovoados
guardadas por um jacaré.

—Eu só quero a filha da rainha Luzía.

Tem que entregar a sombra para o Bicho do Fundo.
Tem que fazer mironga na lua nova.
Tem que beber três gotas de sangue.

—Ah só se fôr da filha da rainha Luzía!

A selva imensa está com insônia.

Bocejam árvores sonolentas.
Ai que a noite secou. A água do rio se quebrou
Tenho que ir-me embora.

Me sumo sem rumo no fundo do mato
onde as velhas árvores grávidas cochilam.

De todos os lados me chamam:
—Onde vais, Cobra Norato?
Tenho aqui três árvorezinhas jovens à tua espera.

—Não posso.
Eu hoje vou dormir com a filha da rainha Luzía.

IV

Esta é a floresta de hálito podre,
parindo cobras.

Rios magros obrigados a trabalhar.

A correnteza se arrepia nos remoinhos
descascando as margens gosmentas.

Raízes desdentadas mastigam lodo

Num estirão alagado
o charco engole a água do igarapé.

Fede.
O vento mudou de lugar

Um assobio assusta as árvores.
Silêncio se machucou

—Yes, now
I will see Queen Luzía's daughter!

But first you must pass through seven doors.
See seven white women with empty wombs, watched
over by a crocodile.

—I just want to see Queen Luzía's daughter.

First you must give your shadow to the Bottomless Being.
Accomplish extraordinary deeds under the rising moon.
Drink three drops of blood.

—Only if it's the blood
of Queen Luzía's daughter!

The immense forest suffers insomnia.

Sleepy trees are now yawning.
The night is all dried up. The river waters are broken.
I have to go.

I vanish into the ancient forest
where pregnant trees are napping.

From everywhere they call me:
—Where are you going, Cobra Norato?
Here we have three young saplings, awaiting you.

—I can't.
Tonight I will sleep with Queen Luzía's daughter.

IV

This is the rotten-breathed forest
giving birth to cobras.

Meager rivers are forced to work.

The running water shivers in the swirls
husking the slimy banks.

Toothless roots masticate mud.

In a swampy stretch of road
the pond swallows the igarapé's water.

Stinks.
The wind has moved out.

A hiss frightens the trees.
The silence was hurt.

Cai lá adiante um pedaço de pau sêco:
pum.

Um berro avulso atravessa a floresta
Chegam vozes.

O rio se engasgou num barranco

Espia-me um sapo sapo sapo
Por aqui há cheiro de gente
—Quem é você?

—Sou a Cobra Norato
Vou me amaziar a filha da rainha Luzía.

VI

Passo nas beiras de um encharcadiço
lambido pelas enxurradas.
Um plasma visguento se descostura
e alaga as margens rasas debruadas de lama.

Vou furando paredões moles.
Caio num fundo escuro de floresta
inchada alarmada mal-assombrada.

Ouvem-se apitos, um bate-que-bate
Estão soldando serrando serrando
Parece que fabricam terra...
Ué! Estão mesmo fabricando terra.

Chiam longos tanques de lôdo-pacoema
Os velhos andaimes podres se derretem
Lameiros se emendam
Mato amontoado derrama-se no chão.

Correm vozes em desordem.
Berram: *Não pode!*
—Será comigo?

Passo por baixo de arcadas folhudas
que respiram um ar úmido.

A floresta trabalha
Espalha planta pelos estirões de terra fresca

Arbustos incognitos perguntam:
—Já será dia?
Manchas de luz abrem buracos nas copas altas

Àrvores-comadres
passaram a noite tecendo fôlhas em segredo.

Far ahead a dry branch falls:
poom.

A detached howl crosses the forest
Voices arrive.

The river choked itself in a ditch

Frogs spy on me
There is a human scent around here.
—Who are you?

I'm Cobra Norato
Today I will enjoy Queen Luzía's daughter.

VI

I pass the swamp borders
being licked by the torrents.
A viscous plasma rips open,
overflowing the shallow waters with mud.

I thread my way through soft walls.
I fall into a dark bottom of the forest—
it's swollen it's alarmed it's haunted.

Whistles sound, a beat sounds
Something drills and saws and saws
Sounds like a mud factory.
Oh! It really is a mud factory.

Long wide pacoema-slime ponds squeak
The old rotten scaffold melts.
Marshes meet and melt together
Branches and leaves scatter on the ground.

Voices in confusion running
Howling: *"It can't be!"*
—Are they talking to me?

I pass under a tufted arch
that exhales a wet breath.

The forest is working
spreading vegetation over new earth.

Unknown bushes are asking:
—Is it day already?
The light opens holes in the high tree-tops.

Comrade-trees
spent the night secretly weaving leaves.

Vento-ventinho assoprou de fazer cocegas nos ramos
Desmanchou escrituras indecifradas.

XI

Acordo.

A lua nasceu com olheiras.
O silêncio dói dentro do mato.

Abriram-se as estrêlas.
As águas grandes encolheram-se com sono.

A noite cansada parou

Ai compadre!
Tenho vontade de ouvir uma música mole
que se estire por dentro do sangue:
música com gosto de lua
e do corpo da filha da rainha Luzía;

que me faça ouvir de nôvo
a conversa dos rios
que trazem as queixas do caminho
e vozes que vem de longe
surradas de ai ai ai

Atravessei o Treme-treme

Passei na casa do Minhocão.
Deixei minha sombra para o Bicho-do-Fundo
só por causa da filha da rainha Luzía

Levei puçanga de cheiro
e casca de tinhorão
fanfan com fôlhas de trevo
e raiz de mucura-cáa.

Mas nada deu certo...

Ando com uma jurumenha
que faz um dõizinho na gente
e morde o sangue devagarinho.

*Ai compadre.
Não faça barulho
que a filha da
rainha Luzía
talvez ainda esteja dormindo.*

*Ai onde andaré
que eu quero sòmente*

A wind—a little wind—blew, tickling the branches
Undid undeciphered writings.

XI

I wake up.

The moon rose with bags under its eyes.
The silence hurts within the forest.

The stars are clean.
The great waters shrank while sleeping.

The tired night has stopped.

Oh, my friend!
I feel like listening to soft music—
that stretches itself within my blood:
a music that tastes like the moon
and like Queen Luzia's daughter's body;

and that makes me hear again
the conversations of the rivers—
which bring the lamentations of the journey
and voices that came from far away
swollen with sobbings

I crossed the Shaken-lands

I stopped at the Big Worm's house.
I left my shadow with the Bottomless Being
only for Queen Luzia's daughter

I brought scented potions
and tinhorão-tree bark
a bunch of clover-leaves
and mucura-cá roots.

But nothing worked out...

I go with such a sadness—
that slowly hurts a little
and bites the blood tenderly.

*Oh, my friend.
Do not make noise
because maybe
the daughter of Queen Luzia
is still sleeping.*

*Oh, where would she be
for I only want to see*

*ver os seus olhos molhados de verde
seu corpo alongado de canarana.*

*Talvez ande longe...
E eu virei vira-mundo
para ter um querzindo
de apertar o corpo de pele de flor
da filha da
rainha Luzia*

Ai não faça barulho...

XV

*Céu muito azul.
Garcinha branca voou voou...
Pensou que o lago era lá em cima.*

*Pesa um mormaço. Dói a luz nos olhos.
Sol parece um espelhinho.*

Vozes se dissolvem:

Passarão sozinho risca a paisagem bojuda.

1928/1931

*her eyes wet with green
her body—slim—like sugar-cane.*

*Maybe she is far away...
And I became a vagabond,
a world-traveller, wishing
to squeeze the body made of skin of flower
of the daughter
of Queen Luzia.*

Oh, do not make noise...

XV

*Sky very blue.
White little heron flew and flew...
It thought the lake was way above.*

*Heavy dampness. Light hurting the eyes.
The sun seems like a little mirror.*

Dissolving voices:

A lone enormous bird crosses the pregnant horizon.

trans. Renato Rezende

Ricardo Molinari

ARGENTINA

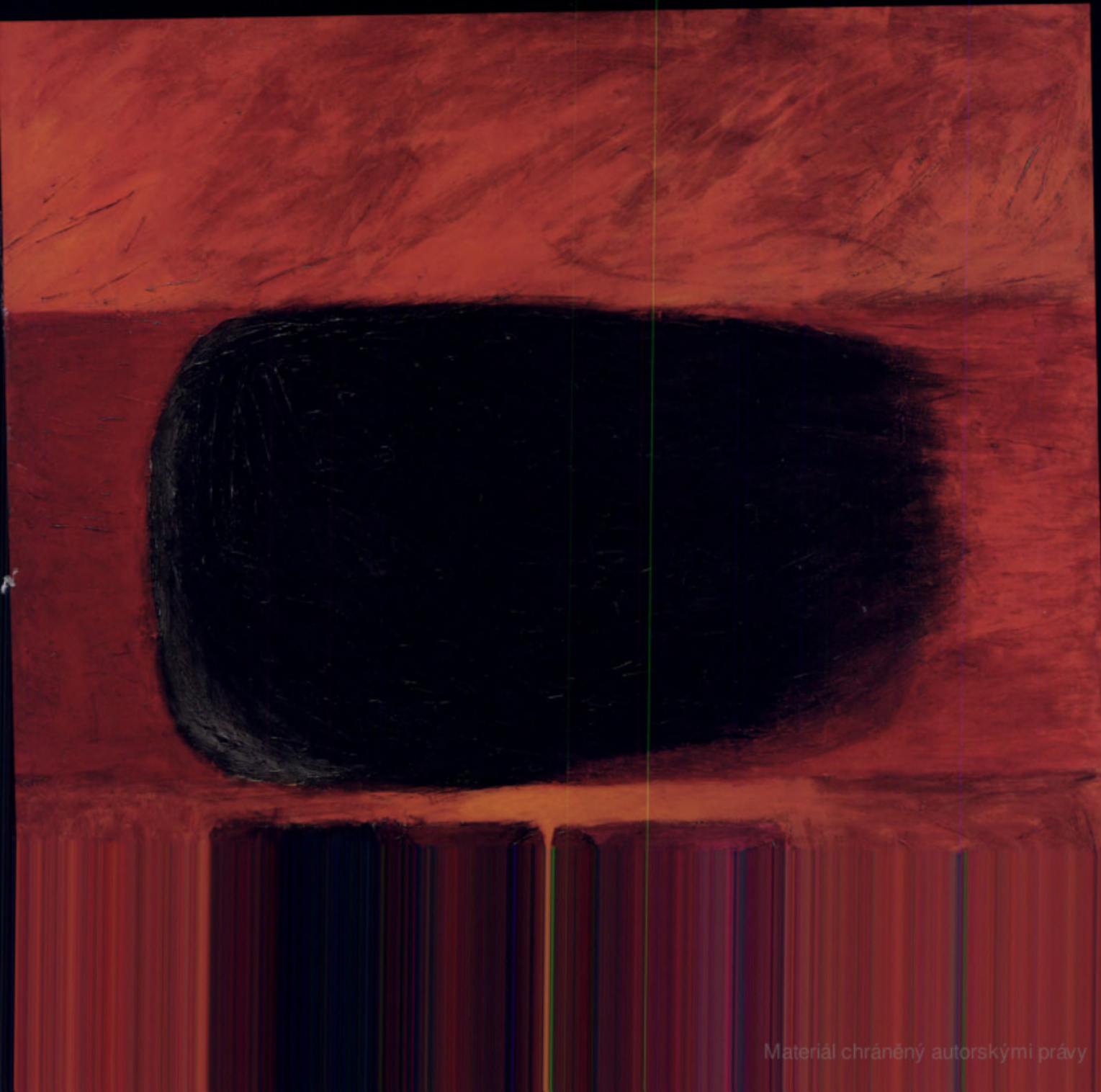
1898–1996

Ricardo Molinari, who maintained that the formal roots of his poems lay in the Spanish classical tradition, lived for many years in Spain, where he was befriended by García Lorca and where he wrote early poems of hermetic intensity. When Molinari returned to Argentina he worked to integrate the austere, image-rich lyricism of his classical training with the rhythms of free verse, to articulate the physical and psychic landscape of his homeland.

If Borges is the poet of Buenos Aires, an urbane and sly and mystical poet, Molinari is the earnest poet of Argentine solitude, of the landscape of the pampas, of the mortal and transitory elements of experience. "My poetry is my world," he once explained. "I sing what I cannot keep, what becomes absence." Thus, in this thematic of absence and verbal repetition, Molinari's poems ally themselves with the mystical themes of time and its verbal echoes in Borges. Molinari's ablest critic, Julio Arístedes, characterized this central thematic as "the agony of being in time." This combination of solitude and elegance, evident in Molinari's "odes" and in the collection *Un día, el tiempo, y las nubes* (*A Day, Time, and the Clouds*, 1964), largely explains his enduring influence on younger Argentine poets.

EDITED BY STEPHEN TAPSCOTT

TWENTIETH-CENTURY
LATIN AMERICAN
POETRY *A Bilingual Anthology*



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