Paesagggio

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EDITED BY
Blauer Hase
The man in the purple turban
Thanadar ata hai!
(to lover) Will I give you that thrashing?

A crimson dhoti
A ceremonial loincloth
Presented by Benares Brahmins
Fat Bengali clerk
Very much a Hindu
Despite his earnest efforts

A man should lie
To protect
A lady in distress
Scornful Hindu
Lynx-eyed Japanese
Nervous Mohammedan

It’s just India, I guess
So big and teeming
And strange
The text fragments are from the 1937 novel Bengal Fire.


Brown and Yellow perils, all bleeding together in a kedgeree.

Kedgeree is made from cooked flaked fish, boiled rice, hard-boiled eggs, curry powder, and butter. It is believed to have been brought back to England by British colonials who had enjoyed it in India in the form of the rice-and-lentil dish Khichri. It became a breakfast dish in Victorian England, as part of a fashion for Anglo-Indian cuisine.

There is a rival theory that it was originally a Scottish dish, which traveled to India and then came back as an “Indian dish.” However, the years don’t match up. In The Scottish Kitchen, Christopher Trotter traces the dish to 1790. But Ibn Batuta is recorded as describing a dish called Kishri around 1340, and there is a recipe for it in Ain-i-Akbari, dating from 1590.

Lawrence Bloch was a 1930s author who specialized in thrillers set in steamy colonial India. Besides Bengal Fire, his other novels, all out of print, include Wives to Burn and Bombay Mail.

A well thumbed, carefully repaired, original paperback edition of Bengal Fire was sitting in a used book market in Lima, Peru. After months of grappling with Spanish basic books, I was desperate for something, anything, in English.

Later, that evening, when it became clear that the book was unreadable (in Bengali we say “okhaddyo”, or inedible), I started jotting down fragments on separate pieces of paper.

Not quite oulipo. But with scissors, book, and glue, you can write a piece of doggerel for a Lima evening.

Today, looking at the book again after ten years, I noticed that the spine is repaired with paper from elsewhere. The text on the spine now reads: Champagne “La Fourie”

And on the next line:
Cognac Reservado
Two Fragments from Sweet Sweat (p. 19)
The pornographic novel *Sweet Sweat* (1931) that survived only in fragmentary form, is the only extant text by the Jewish-Belgian Surrealist painter Justine Frank (1900-1943). The novel's translation to English, along with a biography of the artist and an essay on her work, was published as Roee Rosen, *Justine Frank, Sweet Sweat* (Berlin, Sternberg Press, 2009). Translated from French by Joanna Führer-Ha'asfari.
© Justine Frank, 1931.

*I Want Back Home (said the big frog)* (p. 23)
From "I Want Back Home (said the big frog)", 2010, mixed media installation. Courtesy Galleria Continua San Gimignano / Beijing / Le Moulin.
Text edited by Christy Lange.

A story of a man who is living in the woods (p. 26)

Introduction to a short untitled work of fiction in five chapters (p. 29)
White ink drawing and silkscreen print on black paper, 45 1/2 × 31 1/8 inches. Collection of Peggy T. Hall, New York.
White ink drawing and silkscreen print on black paper, 45 1/2 × 31 1/8 inches. Private Collection, New York.
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An invention without a future (p. 35)
© Mark Lewis, 2013.

*Tocuyo* (p. 45)
© Oscar Muñoz, 2013.

*The Green Ray* (p. 47)