

The New Criterion

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Baume du Doge

by Moira Egan

for Mark Strand

In Venice, the *aperitivo*'s garnished
with such voluptuous chunks of orange
that one among us jokes: *Drinks* and *vitamins*!
In truth, though, I recall our conversations,
in equal measure, seriousness and play.
Slow walks and smokes along the Grand Canal,
talk of cinnamon, cardamom, the Spice Trade;
each of us trying to name the precise shade
the sky takes on as the day fades.
Saffron.

He said, *All poetry is formal,*
existing within limits, straits imposed
by language or tradition. Evening knelled in
by San Marco's carillon,
the dusky gusts of myrrh and frankincense.
In a city like this, founded on such elegance,
the silks and velvets trailing wakes of benzoin
and vetiver, the night mind's so sweetly
deceived into believing in permanence.

Moira Egan's most recent collection, *Synæsthesium* (Criterion Books), won The New Criterion Poetry Prize.

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