Cover Essay

So Sing the Redwoods of San Servolo

Please intervene. We starve and sere at sea—
the arborescent tide, aquamarine,
decrees where prayer, cure, and lore will be
against the memories of those unseen.

Forfending pestilence and martial spleen,
your supplicants pled importunity
for the tranquility of this demesne:
“Please. Intervene. We starve and sear at sea.”

Absconding carnivalesque revelry,
a bawdy more Rabelais than Racine,
your mad found, ministering at the quay,
the arborescent tide aquamarine.

Supping espresso on the mezzanine,
your pedants listen to a homily
on how acidification’s true mean
decrees where prayer, cure, and lore will be.

Whether or not the university
costumes its mien with the zero-net green
of *l'uomo selvatico*, you see,
against the memories of those unseen,

the ennui of the bourgeoisie careen
into links of gondolas *en famille*,
into the offal of so-called cuisine,
into the cruise ships *en route* to Capri.
Please intervene.

Mark Olival-Bartley

ABOUT THE POEM AND THE POET

This dramatic monologue is a roundel redoublé, a Renaissance form of poetry marked by refrain. An islet in the Venetian lagoon, San Servolo (which has, over thirteen hundred years, housed a Benedictine monastery, military hospital, and insane asylum) is now home to Venice International University—an academic consortium whose areas of focus include environmental security, sustainable logistics, and cultural heritage. *L'uomo selvatico* references, not far from the redwoods themselves, a life-sized bronze sculpture that represents either Silvanus or “the wild man of the woods”. This poem is dedicated to Prof. Dr. Klaus Benesch, the director of LMU Munich’s Amerika-Institut and a frequent visitor to San Servolo, whose mentorship brought the poet to this singular place and its extraordinary copse of *Sequoia sempervirens*, a centuries-old legacy of its storied apothecary garden.

Mark Olival-Bartley is the poet in residence at EcoHealth Alliance. He tutors composition and American literature at LMU Munich, where he is presently writing his dissertation, *Shapes and Echoes of Robinson’s “Sonnet”*.

ABOUT THE ART AND THE ARTIST

Matt Beard graduated from Humboldt State University in 1998 with a major in Studio Art and minor in Philosophy. Growing up surfing the California coast, hunting the elusive “secret” spot, memorizing entries from Bank Wright’s classic *Surfing California*, the diverse beauty California’s coastline captivated Matt from an early age, and continues to inspire his artwork to this day. Aside from these coastal explorations, Matt has also been enjoying painting performances with live musicians lately, exploring the possibilities and limitations of creating spontaneous art as an extension of the music itself. Other subjects of recent exploration have ranged from simple poetic subtleties of water to the varied complexities of mathematical expressions of waves through rhythms, cycles, and vibrations. Visit www.mattbeardart.com for more of Matt’s work.