

Cover Essay



La Dama, 2005, by res & Constanza Piaggio

Chimera

Odysseus, Odysseus, your way
 is lost, and your appeal, its feinted whine,
 is subtle as the scabbard's hilt, with which
 you seem to think would somehow make me switch—
 that is, whose sanguinary heft would sway
 me to undo the spell that made them swine.

And, yet, I wonder: What, indeed, are swine
 but beasts amid their filth that swill their way
 to corpulence and, sated so, then sway
 their monstrous haunches, as beset by wine,
 upon the solitary sow and switch
 as each has fed? This wonder needs no witch.

You spit and damn me polydactyl witch
 for penning piggish boors as they were swine—
 and, yet, not one among your men would switch
 back to his erstwhile form and former way
 before this honey-flavored Pramnian wine
 unmasked a nature made of porcine sway.

Perhaps, dear man, your legendary sway
 of wily charms finds favor with this witch,
 who might, for you, decant her sweetest wine,
 whose potent draft could slake the thirst of swine
 or sluice the poets past Parnassus' way.
 Now, drink, and bid no more whom I should switch.

You brandish flowers now to hex my switch!
 Have you forgotten with the hour's sway
 that Hermes' powers vanish fast away?
 Then let me grant your wish and so bewitch
 the game that you have sought. Your men from swine
 will be procured once they have drunk this wine—

yet, stay, Odysseus, and heed, for wine
 that mines a greater transubstantial switch
 will one day mingle flesh of men with swine
 where theurgists' appeals will hold no sway;
 so casting this chimera, I, as witch,
 divine how all your kind have lost their way:

As they eschewed the vintner's way to wine
 and to the witch's kitchen made their switch,
 their sphere had swilled its sway beyond mere swine.

Mark Olival-Bartley

ABOUT THE POEM AND THE POET

This dramatic monologue, a sestina, is drawn from Homer—where Odysseus encounters Circe, who has turned his men into pigs—a subject whose complexities have preoccupied the likes of Plutarch, Michel de Montaigne, Giordano Bruno, Mathew Arnold, Austin Dobson, and Carol Ann Duffy.

Mark Olival-Bartley is the poet-in-residence at Eco-Health Alliance. He is presently reappraising the sonnets of E. A. Robinson for his dissertation at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München, where he tutors poetics and composition.

ABOUT THE COVER ART AND THE ARTIST

res (Argentina, 1957) and Constanza Piaggio (Argentina 1982) worked in collaboration from 2004 to 2008 making *Conatus*, a series of photographs that seek the origin of contemporary technical images and particularly photography in the Renaissance. In doing so, they explore the relationship between painting and photography, as well as the state of human consciousness and perspective. *La Dama*, a work of that series, takes as a reference *Lady with an Ermine* by Leonardo da Vinci.

In their remake of *Lady with an Ermine*, res and Constanza replace the stoat with a severed, bloodless pig's head. During the Renaissance, it was said that the stoat in its

white winter pelt represented purity and would rather die than soil itself—thus ruining the coat, whereas the pig would rather soil itself than die. Further, res and Constanza decided to add an almost undetectable sixth digit to the right hand of *La Dama* to mirror the disproportionately large hand of the woman in da Vinci's painting.

res was born in Córdoba, Argentina in 1957. In 1978, he was exiled to Mexico and returned to Argentina in 1985. He studied photography at Spilimbergo Art School, Córdoba and Casa del Lago, Economics at Universidad Nacional Autónoma Mexico (UNAM), México DF from 1978 to 1984, and gained a Master of Arts in Communication at European Graduate School in Switzerland from 2001 to 2002.

Constanza Piaggio splits time between Buenos Aires and Paris, France. Constanza studied The School of Creative Photography at Escuela de Fotografía Creativa and Direction of Photography at the Sindicato de la Industria Cinematográfica from 2001 to 2004.

www.res.com.ar

www.constanzapiaggio.com

ON THE COVER

La Dama, 2005, by res & Constanza Piaggio. Photograph, C-Print, 64 x 48 in