

LAIMA VINCĖ

Portrait of a Woman

Florentine 1459/60–1537

Tucked in the corner
Before the Exit sign
And the stairwell
Before the restrooms
You will find me.

Between my index finger
And thumb I rub
A wedding band.

My elbows are stiff—
As though hacked off
By Shakespeare's fancy.

Prickly limbs
Fan out behind my back
Against a November sky.
Some say, a mini ice-age.

Dressed in black,
I am a widow,
Or otherwise
Beyond my prime.

I've been reborn
From ash time
And time again.

I am all women
Of all times
Even of times
Yet to come.

I am the half-naked woman
Pounding my chest
In a B-movie.

I am the woman
Clenched in King Kong's fist
Lifted high above the skyline
And the one who calms him.

I am the witch
Who dances grotesquely
About a great fire.
I am the one condemned
At the stake.

I am the gossip in stocks.
I am the voiceless woman,
Her talk scattered
Across a vast ocean.

I am the immigrant woman
Peering through a crack
In the tenement wall.

I am the woman listening
In on the extension.

I am the woman
With matted hair
Gazing at you
Out of a bundle of rags.

Or the woman
Sneaking a look
Out at the world
From within
The voluminous folds
Of a burqa.

I am the bare-breasted
Woman on the dusty cover
Of a tattered *National Geographic* magazine,
And the one in the *Penthouse* centerfold.

I am the woman
Who sets the castle ablaze
And the one who runs
Shrieking through its corridors.

I am all the mad women
Locked in all the towers.

I am your nagging mother.
I am your bickering sister.
I am your crazy wife.

I am the ancient one
Reborn from James Joyce's
Irish stew.

I am the infant
With a pink bandeau
Compressing
My fragile skull.

I am the young woman
Who lives next door—
The one with a future
Always ahead of her
And just out of reach.

You see me pass
Each day
On the subway
On your way to work.

Laima Vincė (Sruoginis) has received two Fulbright fellowships, a National Endowment for the Arts fellowship, and grants and recognition from PEN International and the Academy of American Poets. She has translated two volumes by Lithuania's national poet, Marcelijus Martinaitis: *Ballads of Kukutis* and *K. B., The Suspect*. She has also edited a collection of contemporary Lithuanian poetry in translation, *Raw Amber*.

ANDREA BORSUK

Is It Worth It?, 2015
Oil on Wood Panel, 24 x 40 in



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