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## The Girls of My Youth

Mile Stoji?

The girls of my youth, nausicaas  
 The girls of my youth, dianas, danaias, lolitas  
 they are only in their forties, but they are already gray haired, creased  
 foreheads, wrinkled hands  
 those “ladylike ones behind the sewing machines”  
 Many of them are already toughened, have already forgotten love  
 as a foreign language is forgotten.

The girls of my youth, ruths and sulamkas  
 The girls of my youth, sea fairies  
 have large and empty eyes  
 All of their tears they have depleted  
 But they were as if created for adultery, sisters of esther and judith

All of their adulteries they spent  
 in bomb shelters, in basements, in lines for bread  
 all of their sinful thoughts they bestowed upon the dead  
 Sometimes in passing they smile at me  
 but more with care, like a mother to a foolish child  
 When, during coffee, I mention missed opportunities  
 they say: you left, and you still feel up to it. You don't know how it is  
 to be numb to everything  
 When winter gives birth to its child

Their heavy hair I sometimes ruffle in dreams  
 Their proud behinds I touch with the rustle of silk  
 Their small breasts I gently cover with palms  
 and I think: by god, in ten years they will all be dead

Quickly will die these goddesses of my youth  
 crushed by war, hunger and tears  
 those penelopes without suitors, brides with extinguished smiles  
 Those inaccessible secret wells of pleasure of long ago  
 those antigones that evoke emptiness, emptiness without hope  
 emptiness without echo

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*Translated by Sara Elaquad – © 2007 Sara Elaquad*

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