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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

Translated by Sara Elaquad – © 2007 Sara Elaquad

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