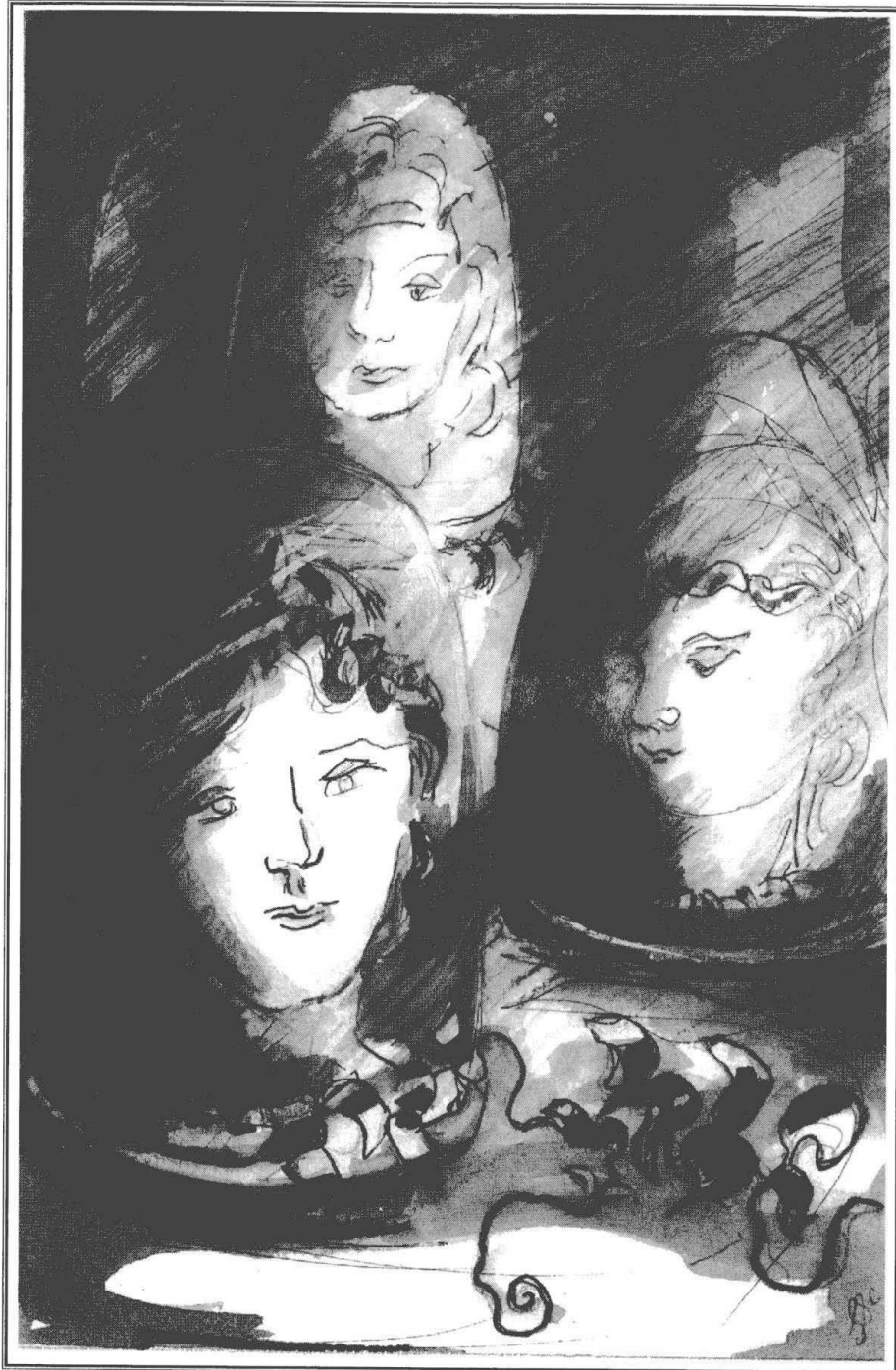


**Nicolette Stasko**

## PORTRAITS

Across the desk  
my ladies  
peer at me from behind their glass  
in fourteenth century headdress and  
complicated jewels  
they seem to be  
telling me something  
no they are not  
their looks are knowing  
but disdainful  
of a person not recognising  
her place yet  
longing for what  
may be impossible  
at such an age  
their eyelids lower imperceptibly  
one turns a cold set profile  
the other with her  
shell-like ears a loop of silk  
on her smooth forehead beneath  
a tall cylinder of  
black velvet swathed with veil  
smiles slightly  
bemused  
and retreats  
without a word into  
her perfect form



LINO