

// NANCY MOREJÓN, born 1944, Cuba
(translated by Kathleen Weaver)

MOTHER

My mother had no patio garden
but rocky islands
floating in delicate corals
under the sun.
Her eyes mirrored no clear-edged branch
but countless garrottes.
What days, those days when she ran barefoot
over the whitewash of orphanages,
and didn't laugh
or even see the horizon.
She had no ivory-inlaid bedroom,
no drawing-room with wicker chairs,
and none of that hushed tropical stained-glass.
My mother had the handkerchief and the song
to cradle my body's deepest faith,
and hold her head high,
banished queen —
She gave us her hands, like precious stones,
before the cold remains of the enemy.

FROM: AIN'T I A WOMAN

