

i.

I know why your anger flares so high  
Like you I was born first female child  
Bred to be educated, capable and strong  
I applaud the courage you possess by far  
Confronting our matriarch harsh and cold  
My mother, your grandmother dominates the soul  
Recalling childhood and adolescence we shared  
I could never muster the bravado you declared  
To deal with the woman who kept a stern hold  
Escaping those days of obedience through fear  
So constantly aware of her disapproving sneer

II

But my dear niece  
Did you ever wonder  
What would have become of us  
Had she allowed us to slumber  
Let's look at the past and see what's discovered  
Underneath the rocks from whence we recovered.  
There was violence, rape and incest true  
the man should be despised and hung for his dues  
instead he walks around proud for his deeds  
the mother silent in submissive reprieve  
knowing who fathered her grand babies

III

From the time you were born who was your care  
bathed you, fed you and comb your hair  
who'd buy you new clothes every school year  
and read you stories before sending you to bed  
The projects would not have you  
She vowed everyday  
Education, church and work, she shoved in your ahead  
From a gangly girl, to a strong-willed teen  
You studied and learned of a new regime  
Theaters, ballet, operas, and travel

Took the place of the streets, the boys and the havoc  
No babies for you, nor thugs or drugs  
She drove you hard to make a way

IV

Finally leaving your siblings, five others at home  
remote miles away in their ghetto abode  
Look at you now well ordered and controlled  
Sophisticated, confident oozing with charm  
Behind those eyes you deceive them all  
Thrashing inside beings of abhorrence and loathe  
For the woman who taught you, the woman you are  
Such style and grace mask the face  
Curse the woman whose status you trace

V

You made your way out a miraculous feat  
What did you forfeit for this seat  
A past you deny. A family disowned.  
A life away from her choking hold.  
Yet hard as you might you cannot escape  
The legacy of grandmother's malarious care  
a curse and a blessing we first daughters do share.