CASAL, LOURDES (1938–1981)

Writer, activist and intellectual, Lourdes Emilia Irene de la Caridad Casal y Valdés was born into a middle-class family of privilege in Havana, Cuba. At the Catholic University of Villanueva, she earned a degree in chemical engineering while honing her skills as a student activist in the Student Revolutionary Directorate. Counterrevolutionary activities followed and forced Casals into U.S. exile. She completed a doctorate at the New School for Social Research, and joined the faculty at the City University of New York, and later Rutgers University. In 1969 she co-founded the Institute of Cuban Studies, contributed to the magazine Nuevo Generación, and helped found the Antonio Maceo Brigade. Among her early publications are El caso Padilla (1971), and Los fundadores: Alfonso y otros Cuentos (1973). In 1974 she published The Cuban Minority in the United States. Four years later, Casals participated in the Dialogue, a meeting between members of the Cuban government and a group of exiles that led to the release of political prisoners, family reunification, and travel agreements. Her last book, Palabras juntan revolución, received a posthumous award by Casa de las Américas in Cuba.