

Ellis Island was never much
to the Tainos or the Arawaks
to the Caribs or the Africans
O Shango, Shango
O le pido a Shango,
yet who should see their faces
ancient as the gods
arriving around the curve
of the Golden Circle on Flight 262.

Suppose, after all,
we tramp through Brooklyn, Harlem,
your haunt near Chinatown,
rummage in the aromas of buildings—chickpeas and rice,
bananas overripe in the bodega;
may I then come to this:
you are more than just woman
homing on the scent of identity.

EN LA BODEGA

I imagine bananas hanging in the window
And men, mostly, sitting around
Sharing cigarettes, sneaky pete and gossip.

Relief mothers coming at twelve
With the numbers for last night's dreams
To play for a quarter or fifty cents—not a dollar.

En la bodega, one buys the long and short:
Rice, island fruit and vegetables
Bad fish from Brooklyn and Schaefer's beer.

I imagine you there at, say, La Perla del Caribe,
Dressed as a ballerina, rag doll with yellow hair in tow,
In search of Love and Coco Rico.

But, let's say, that was the summer of 1957
And you were on an errand.
Love en la bodega is expensive and coconut soda costs a dime.