

1991

## Nueva York, New York, 1986

Fredrick Woodard

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.uiowa.edu/iowareview>

Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Woodard, Fredrick. "Nueva York, New York, 1986." *The Iowa Review* 21.1 (1991): 32-33. Web.  
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.3961>

This Contents is brought to you for free and open access by Iowa Research Online. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Iowa Review by an authorized administrator of Iowa Research Online. For more information, please contact [lib-ir@uiowa.edu](mailto:lib-ir@uiowa.edu).

I am waiting to catch you,  
to expose your cover,  
to catch your form as an augur in my thoughts  
on an argument about justice.

Undercover, I am afraid.  
My heart beats over the beta blocker.  
What if we could have saved you?  
What if, after all, you choked on our love  
and died of overexposure?  
Are we then guilty of murder?  
I think so; and, in this poem, suppose  
you alone know the answers  
and that my certainty is just another point of light?

*March 23, 1989*

### NUEVA YORK, NEW YORK, 1986

This is the problem:  
it is your second coming;  
you, broken by these plains,  
these flat lands,  
profound season,  
returning in the guise of a proletarian  
with a second language.

So I will go along  
as Obeah, Shaman, Crow,  
inherit the territories,  
resurrect immigrant beginnings  
sing the way clear: Shango, Shango.  
Le pido a Shango.  
Shango, Shango,  
le pido a Shango.

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.