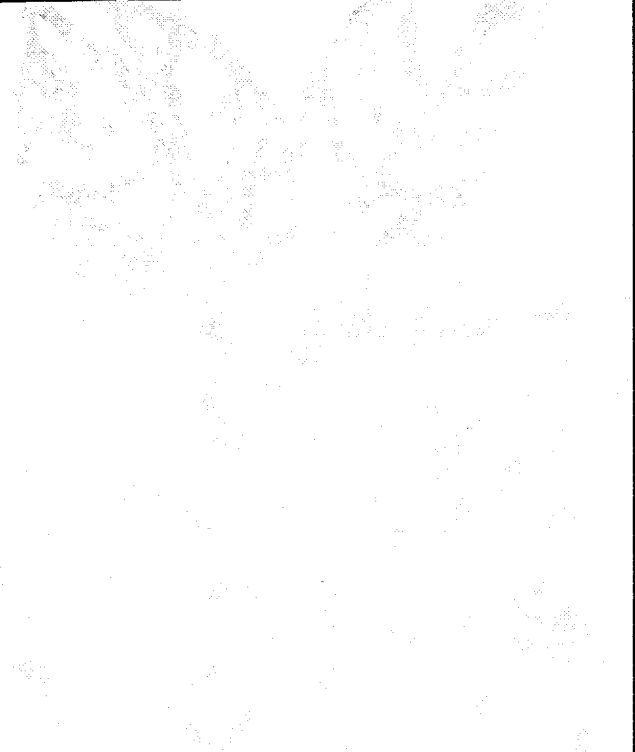


Be|adonna* #101

Winter 2007



repuestas!

by
Patricia Spears Jones



Belladonna Books

458 Lincoln Place, Suite 4B Brooklyn, NY 11238

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deadly nightshade, a cardiac and respiratory stimulant, having purplish-red flowers and black berries

repuestas!

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What is sadder than a train standing in the rain?
Sentiment overflows the tracks shallow rails
rampages the baggage area,
whips the dining car waiter into positions
catalogued in the Kama Sutra.

Oh surely the harvest moon will clarify where the road bends
and birds with vulgar plumage strike elaborate poses;
where uniformed guards walk gingerly from one locked door to the other
as if they could offer protection from the witching hours

Propensity to dispense violence: relentless slaps
to faces, arms, chests. Poke in the eye, bite on the thigh,
a pistol's report, that leap from the 30th floor
a dangling man's chair turned over,
this young girl's bleeding hands,
love malformed.

Old love magazines, new drug store novelas, illustrate a language of loss.
Boy girl, man woman, mother child, old man his young self, status useless.
Pain is pain and trains in rain are sad, Senor Neruda.

Immobile train cannot sing its signal.
Wake the lonesome girl child planning her escape to Paris, Manhattan or
Timbuktu,
Chase the moon or
Stop the plunge of a murderer's knife nor the care of a suicide's ablution.

Impotent, train stutters, forgets pride,
curses rain.

Trabajan la sal y el azúcar/Construyendo una torre blanca?

Do salt and sugar work to build a white tower?
No, they do not speak to each other.

Salt and pepper are masons
building
the perfect blank
a beautiful stark

White on white walls thick—whole cities surrounded with
lustrous black roadways—jeweled paths daunt

It is curiosity Senor Neruda that forms the white foundations
that rise platform after platform floor by floor into air—

Towers as look out.
What is seen—the enemy approaching? Or

Lot's wife dissolving—myth and punishment
elevator and aperture—the eye apparent.

But where are their tools? put aside for dazzle

2.

Sugar tastes like sex, surprise
Salt and pepper become sun and water or lobby and floor.

Oh these white towers spiced with story, precarious
platform after platform, floor by floor falling into ruin, reverie—
blanco, negro, mustard, sienna, and beryl.

Y cuando se muda el paisaje, son tus manos or son tus guantes?

And when you change the landscape, is it with your bare hands or with
gloves?

I change the landscape with gloves on.
I hate dirt beneath my fingernails
I like manicures, but that's another poem

Oh yes, the theatricality of scene setting is pleasing
like a rain storm's beating the hard green of magnolia leaves.

A tea set from Memphis showing pleasures of the every day
a ginkgo leaf
Darjeeling tea in a generous cup
or is it Earl Gray
Smoke off the barbecue, a daybed for dreaming

As affection enters, we could make a fond scene
letting the sideshow of sadness move to the Big Tent
where manicured aerialists swing from willow tree to ancient oak
thirsty in blue air, searching for the wisdom of chlorophyll

Yellow leaves, a tea set, sadness in blue air.
Oh see what the gloves have thrown against the wall

Murieron tal vez de vergüenza estos trens que se extraviaron?

Perhaps they died of shame those trains that lost their way?
That would be much too easy, *Maestro*,
didn't you hear?
They were driven, then dropped
into the sea, where they mingle with sad ships,
once huge with cargos

men, women, children lost there--the Middle Passage,
piracy, stupidity, greed—fates' ugly hands
awaiting discovery.

On land they remain mythic womb factories

Coffins

At peace, trains sing no more midnight rambles
Or announce deaths possible destination,
as sunlight tracks and timetables mingled

But in ocean, they are comic, odd—windows open to sea grasses,
coral, schools of fish—paying them no never mind

Era verdad aquel aroma/de la doncella sorprendida

Was it true (real) that scent of the surprised maiden?
Who would know, but her lover, his tongue exploring
those generous lips between her legs

Suddenly knowledgeable of her treasure and loss
breath rises and falls growing stronger to stay
her Venus ascends and his scent grows
a forest of toadstools, brambles, roots digging
eating the rot and riot of forest floor.

How genial they are—sex and sympathy,
Simpatico, a word, you knew too well, *Maestro*
Your tongue at play with many a maiden,
surprising many a matron.

How nature surprises each of us
Peach taste
Fish flapping
Hurricane reshaping North Carolina's Outer Banks

Moss, flowers, ferns erupt those walks across *Isla Negra*
Voicing a verdant earth encircled by desire

Sought
Found
Lost

and found again.

Si se termina el amarilol, con que vamos a hacer el pan?

If the color yellow runs out, with what will we make bread?
Why the color yellow—Gold always

Gold, the color of money, cowardice, sun.

Orange, tamarind —colors of un-baptized monsters,
Humming in the depths of the Mississippi, the Amazon

The United States blue
And what of Paraguay, Peru—white, color of abandonment?

Millions from Africa, from Europe
Come to make the New World greener, greater
Bold, but

This hemisphere was green and glorious
Bold and treacherous, the old ways diseased; the new ways, a mystery.

Blue and unfathomable waters shelter poisonous snakes and musical frogs,
Birds of paradise, and on the hieratic steps of the Mayan temples, skulls,
the color of tourist beaches.

Priests led rituals made in anticipation of a new sword,
But what they got was the gun,
phosphorous, fire
yellow the color of peasant breads, tortillas, corn patties
mush

How did these conquerors know what would take to make this New World?

Not even You, dear Poet.

Witness the Struggle to make bread with colors of this contested earth,
with the colors given at birth.
The economists carefully calculate the value of corn crops
North and South of the equator
but their formulas motion indifference to poverty's rainbow.

You knew who pays for the packaged goods, the soft white bread.
You knew it would be the slashed hands of peasants and poets.

Questions Neruda Did Not Live to Ask

Que es la SIDA? What is AIDS?

A late 20th century disease one that disappears whole families in Africa

Americans know this peril but play fire,

turn to retro virals. These are new words, new ways

to talk medicine.

But there is no cure.

Humans act poorly when they feel protected—

drive faster with the seat belt on and air bags ready;

eat too much, then vomit the mess.

But you were spared this scourge.

This is a new brutality—born of deep intimacy: blood and sex

Oh Maestro, our humanity confirmed by the microscopic
and human beings by the free market—treatment, the costs of drugs.

Value remains the poison Maestro: who is worth what?

Who decides? Who will pay?

There is no cure.

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form, multi-cultural, multi-gendered, impossible to define, delicious to talk
about, unpredictable, dangerous with language.

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