

1975

Open

Jerry W. Ward

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to be alone so long. to see you move
in this varicose country
like silhouettes passing in apprenticeship,
from slave to slavery to pimp
to hustler to murderer to negro
to niggahdom to militant to revolutionary
to Blackness to faggot with the same
shadings of disrespect covering your voice.

and the nite, playing a maiden tune,
singes my eyes.

who am i to have loved you in rooms
lit by a single wall?
who am i to have loved at all as the
years come like water and the
madness of my blood drains rivers.

Open / Jerry W. Ward
(for Alice Walker,
after reading *In Love and Trouble*)

You are open.
The delicate tracery
of your soul
is exposed.

You live a year's December.
The cold eyes cast
upon the patterns
of your being
are not often kind,
not always clean.

Within the heart
of the heart
of your being
is a strong castiron stove,
an eternal demon flame.
How otherwise explain
your warm survival?

Sometimes
I watch you,
time your exquisite poise.
Then you are
Zora or Marie Laveau
or a mystery
I do not presume
to understand.

At those times
I fear you most,
because I can
love you
for what you are.

Lébé / Jay Wright

Dyon, the digger,
searching in the primal field,
dug this serpent and the covenant stones.
Turning up life and death like that,
his wisdom told him the land was good.
So it would come just like that,
when the earth wouldn't fit anymore,
when men would sit long hours in the sun,
carping at their neighbors' gifts,
when even the spirit of a nameless child
was uneasy.
Time to carry these sorrows,
these dreams,
away into pure air,
into that spot
where the God would come again.
Then Dyon, the digger, led them,
stopping at Amani,
placing the first altar
under a square stone
covered with mortar,
breaking the earth from the altar
and sending the others on.
"And the Lébé serpent,