

1975

Lébé

Jay Wright

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

Part of the [Creative Writing Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Wright, Jay. "Lébé." *The Iowa Review* 6.2 (1975): 20-21. Web.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0021-065X.1838>

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.

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,

omnipresent,
one yet many like a God,
followed each founder.”
Now, here, the Hogen
holds the man and land in place,
holding his sweatless body
erect on my grandfather’s back.
Though he is copper, sun and water,
he wears the moon,
the shell of the egg,
the ancestors’ tombs,
the seed and the soul of woman,
on his head.
I have seen him now at Arou,
slicing the victim’s liver,
praying heatedly,
turning and flying into the sanctuary
to return with the perfect word.
Oh, my blind saint,
I fear your laughter
when I tell you
that I have visions
of his iron lance,
coiling at my own feet,
feel myself, a postulant,
trembling into knowledge of God’s body,
knowledge of his naming.
I have entered without knowledge,
sandalled and disguised,
to be stripped of myself,
stripped of uneasy visions.
At night, now,
when I lie with my wife,
covered and turned on my side,
the bed is his tomb,
trembling under us,
my funeral pall,
from which, you say,
my name and tilling land
will come again.