

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 niggurdom 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,