

my spirit be-
comes a sack full of ashes.
I open the window
see the bird blind

alone in such fine
sorrow so long

Words / Raymond R. Patterson

Each night with words
to wall out prison walls

brick by word brick by word
from darkness lifting

into wordless space
words from syllables of rage

to rise through caged tiers
towards the clear speech of stars

Can you see now in the dark
in the top of the makeshift scaffolding

the prisoner lifting
the final words into place

some jailer below
shaking his keys and shouting?

To All Brothers: From All Sisters / Sonia Sanchez

each nite without you.

and I give birth to myself.

who am i to be touched at random?

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 nigguhdom 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?