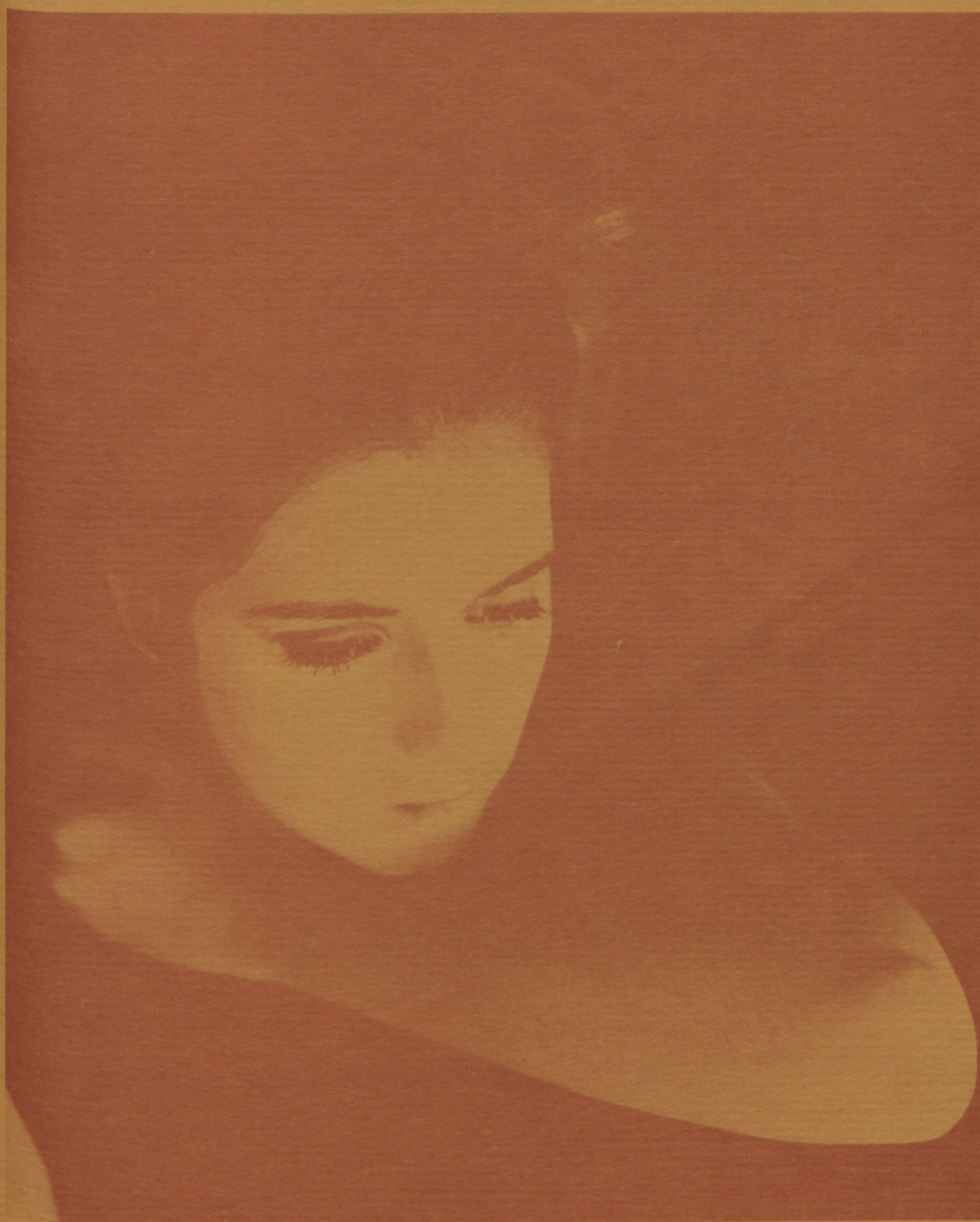


5-22-169



the rebel supplement
eastern north carolina
arts festival

*to last edition
1968-69
School
yr*



Vernon Ward leads off morning workshop in poetry technique.



Workshop participants examine some of their work.

Last year in the spring The North Carolina Arts Council awarded to THE REBEL a grant of \$2,500.00 to encourage the creative arts in eastern North Carolina. At this time, we would like to thank the Council for their interest in promoting the arts in our region and for their support of our efforts to bring to the people of this area a different kind of artistic experience, some think, called a literary magazine.

When we received the grant money, we thought about ways to spend it, to get the most mileage out of the funds. We knew that we wanted to do something to include a larger number of people, talented people, in the creative experience; and we knew we wanted to do something educational. We decided on an Eastern North Carolina Arts Festival, with promotional efforts directed at the high schools in the surrounding area and at East Carolina University. We decided to have workshops on poetry, short fiction, the elements of a literary magazine, newspaper and magazine photography and lay-out, commercial design and the design elements in drawing and sketching. We also decided to have a competition in the areas of photo-essay, short fiction, poetry, and drawing and sketching.

The following pages, and this magazine, is one of the end-products of the festival. We say it is one of the end-products, because it is only a small measure of what went on. The real valuable things that went on were carried away from the festival in the minds and hearts of the people who participated.



Doris Betts, North Carolina Author, addresses festival's awards Luncheon.

"One should never give up wishing. I believe there is no fulfillment, but there are wishes that last a long time, all one's life, so that anyhow one could not wait for their fulfillment."
(from Rilke)

SHORT FICTION

- First Place Edward Abramson (page 2)
Second Place William L. Armistead

POETRY

- First Place Lindsay Bowen (page 8)
Second Place Meg Sencindiver (page 7)
Honorable Mention Robert Sanders

DRAWING AND SKETCHING

- First Place Scott Tabor (page 5)
First Place Denise Gelpi (page 2)
Second Place David Ross (page 9)
Honorable Mention Sally McRarie

PHOTO-ESSAY

- First Place Kelly Adams (cover, and page 6)
Second Place Josie Houstonx
Honorable Mention Karen Colvard
Honorable Mention Don Shirley

Other winning entries will be printed in The Rebel in the future.



Sister Jones and the Prophet

By

Edward A. Abramson

Martha Washington Jones limped slowly down the pot holed dirt street toward the church, her wrinkled brow furrowed more than usual. It was dusk, and the white painted-blistered houses of the Negro quarter stood stark against the sky that had been heat-blasted but three hours before. The houses stood planted in the dirt, always seeming ready to tumble into piles of slats. She remembered them looking that way since her childhood.

White haired prophet goin' to be there tonight, she thought crossing the street. Maybe Oliva'll be healed. Maybe she won't be sick no more...

"What you mean you had to sell it?"

A woman's voice from the window on her right knifed into her thoughts.

"Couldn't you get enough fum him to pay for that carbur... whatever it was? Purty soon you'll have the whole house empty just to keep that car goin'."

"Now look here," a man's voice answered. That car's the best thing we got. So long as we'se got it on the road, we'se got some..."

The voice faded as Martha trudged on down the street thinking of little Oliva at home in bed, a victim of the same poverty that had plagued her own youth.

Only gran'chile left, she thought. She got to get well. She just got to get well. The grooves in her forehead and around her eyes seemed to deepen, and wetness appeared on the lower lid.

Up ahead the square tower of the church reached up above the houses, pushing an incongruously small cross at

the gray blank ness of the sky. There were numerous old cars lining the street in front of the church, and two newly paonted white busses, the brush strokes showing clearly, were crowding their bulk into the narrow dirt road. A small group of women were gathered outside the church talking agitatedly. They looked up as they became aware of the old woman's approach.

"Lo there Sister Jones," and elderly black matron said. "Good you could come tonight. This is goin' to be one fine meetin'."

The woman leaned forward, the brim of her tattered black silk hat occasionally touching Martha's forehead.

"White haired prophet comin' tonight. Oh I tell you Sister Jones, I just know I'se goin' to be saved tonight."

Martha looked down at her black shoes laced up above her ankles. She tried to get some of the mud off them by stamping lightly, but it did no good.

"How's Oliva?" the woman went on. "I heerd she was taken with the coughs for a long time."

"She's still purty bad," Martha said slowly through pink gums. Granger and Mary, they took her to that fancy doctor in town. He said to get some medcine soon as poss'ble. They give me the money to go to the store now and get it."

She looked down guiltily.

"Well you pray for her tonight, an' I bet she be okay 'fore tomorrow."

Martha looked up quickly now, the short gray wisps of hair moving with an independent life of their own as she shook her head vigorously up and down.

"Yes...yes I know. I believe that. That's why I come. That's why I come 'fore goin' to the store."

The sound of a piano and drums in the church caused

the group to totter toward the door. As Martha made her way down the aisle to a pew in front so she could be sure of being near the Prophet, calls of "'Lo Sister Jones'" and "'Glad you could come, Sister Jones'" surrounded her on either side. She smiled slightly and nodded at those many familiar faces and finally stopped next to the second row of benches on her right. Because of her age, the younger women often deferred to her, and a middle aged woman moved in to give her an aisle seat.

As she looked about, Martha saw a good number of people who she did not know. People came from forty miles away to hear the Prophet. This revival had been in progress for three days, with meetings held every night, and it was to run for three more days before moving on to another town. Because of Oliva's illness, Martha had not attended any of the meetings, but had sat home with her granddaughter putting mustard plasters on her chest and feeding her clove tea to try to stop the deep cough. But nothing had worked, and Martha had realized, even if the children had not, that she would have to go to a higher source.

She reached into a "secret compartment" in her tattered brown purse to see if the four dollars were still there. Yes... there they were, she thought as her knarled fingers felt the four distinct crumpled balls. This was the last money in the house till pay day. She would have to be careful. She looked around again and answered a "'Lo Sister Jones'" with a strained smile as she quickly closed the purse and clutched it in her lap.

On the stage she saw the chief of police, who was the pastor of the congregation and had arranged for the revival to take place there. On account of a Klan threat, he had come to the church with three officers during a revival three years before and had been converted. When the old preacher had died, the congregation had asked him to take charge. He was the only white man in the state to be the head of an all black church, and only his position as chief, which miraculously he had been able to hang on to despite community pressures, had kept him free of threats from the local Klan. Now, he was sitting on the platform in the center of two Negro deacons waving his right arm leading the singing of "Precious Lord."

As the strains of the hymn filled the church Martha noticed that it was already almost completely filled, the congregation consisting primarily of fortyish plus women and a number of six-tyish plus men. There were perhaps five people under thirty, except for the small children that clung tightly to their mothers and gazed about with large unsure eyes.

Martha straightened her old hat, a black silk bowl that hugged her gray hair and had plastic flowers on the right side. Many of the women wore hats of this type, some had feathers instead of flowers. Some held tambourines; others stirred small arcs of hot air against their shining black faces with paper fans that had a picture of Jesus on one side and an advertisement for "Crich's Auto Parts" on the other. Martha especially noticed the condition of the older people, the human scarecrows with arms the thickness of an auto exhaust pipe and protruding veins that gave the impression of pencils having been pushed through the skin. Occasionally a wrinkled squash of a face would gaze back at

her and bear two sets of gums in recognition. Lacking hair, the old men gave an even more corpse-like appearance. But she did not find fault with these things --she saw much the same when she looked into a mirror or at a picture of her dead husband.

As the hymn ended voices could be heard from the back of the church: "He's here": craning necks, still fans, upturned faces. She turned and saw the Prophet. He was walking down the aisle toward the dias. Perhaps fifty years old, he wore a belted trenchcoat with the collar turned up, black trousers with a knife sharp crease, and black shoes polished to a mirror finish. Deep blue eyes shone out above a hook nose set in the center of a smooth, intelligent, white face, which was surrounded by a full head of snow white hair. As he walked down the aisle, he smiled at various people who he recognized from other towns, other churches. He walked up to the dias, took off his coat, whispered something in the police chief's ear, and sat down.

Knowing that the congregation had all come to see the

Prophet, the chief did not take charge of the service himself.

"Now I'd like to introduce the Prophet," he said standing behind the lectern. "Y'all know him; y'all know that our Lord speaks through him. I've done some checking on this man, and be lieve me he's a real man of God. So listen close."

He sat down and the Prophet got up on the dias. Martha watched him with hawk eyes, though every time someone coughed her thoughts reverted to Oliva lying in bed, her chest wracked with coughs.

"Hello friends," he said with an ingratiating smile.

"It's nice to see so many familiar faces in the crowd."

He pointed to a few people in the crowd to show that he recognized them. Those chosen for this special recognition sat a bit taller and remained slightly aloof basking in the stares that they knew were being leveled at them.

"Let's begin with 'I Cried and He Delivered Me,' he said glancing back at the piano player. A chord was struck, and over two hundred voices sang out. I cried and He delivered me, Lord I cried and He delivered me, Lord I cried and He delivered me, He delivered my poor soul. A short, squat woman in front of Martha in the front row got up and began beating a tambourine against the heel of her hand. As verse was added to verse, people about the church stood and began clapping their hands to the quickening rhythm; the man on the drums beat to the convulsive cadences that filled the room.

Now people began to stamp their feet. An extremely black woman wearing a white dress was out in the aisle doing a jig while slapping her right hand against her haunch. Martha was standing now also, drumming on the pew in front of her and moving up and down like an aged pile driver, the yellow and red plastic flowers dancing up and down on her hat as she sang and jumped to the spasmodic beat now made up of the Prophet's shouts, the piano's occasionally heard chords, the hanging tambourines, the beating drums, the clapping of dozens of pairs of hands, and the

stamping of hundreds of feet.

"I cried and He delivered me..." The falsetto wail of the women's voices quivered against the yellowish white walls. "I cried and He delivered me..." The Prophet leaned back, his hoary hair flowing out from his head and covering his ears. "I cried and He delivered me..." Martha closed her eyes and shouted to the heavens. "He delivered my poor soul." The Prophet's hand came down hard on the lectern and his powerful voice cut through the last strains of the hymn.

"I've been traveling all over the great state of North Carolina spreading the gospel..."

His voice was firm and controlled, but began to get louder as he spoke.

"And let me tell you that this is the greatest revival year I've ever seen! say Amen."

"Amen," came from the whole congregation.

"Why folks are just burning for the Lord all over, and I tell you that it's a sign. It's a sign that He has some great work that He's going to do. Praise the Lord!"

"Praise the Lord," Martha said.

"Hallelujah," came from the congregation.

He stepped down from the dias and walked into center aisle. He held a small microphone close to his lips.

"Why over west of here we had two hun...no...three hundred brothers and sisters filling the church to bursting..."

"Sweet Jesus," "Hallelu." The cries pierced the lulls from all parts of the throng.

"And they believe in the Lord; they believe in Jesus," he shouted.

"Hmm, hmm."

"Jesus!" sprung from Martha's lips.

"They know He's coming back..."

"That's right."

"And they know He'll heal them of all their pain..."

"Thank you Jesus," came the cry.

"If they believe in Him..."

"Praise God."

"And He'll heal you of your pain too..."

"Hallelujah."

"If you believe." And he put his open left hand up to his ear.

From hundreds of throats: "I believe"; "I believe in Jesus."

See the Prophet walking down the aisle, jacket open, tiny beads of sweat on his forehead reflecting the light. See his up raised arms and the people around him standing and swaying in the pews. See the paper fans forgotten, lying on the worn wooden floor, sometimes "Crich's Auto Parts," sometimes Jesus receiving the imprint of a foot.

"I am God's prophet...I just do what He says...God is in me...I can feel Him...He's here in this place tonight!"

"Help me Jesus," Martha shouted, her eyes closed in fervent absorption.

"If you believe that, say Amen."

"Amen," resounded off the yellowing walls.

He was silent for a moment while he stood wide eyed, staring at the ceiling as if waiting for something.

"Testimony!" he cried triumphantly. He wants someone to testify to His grace. Who will show forth the mercy of the Lord?

Martha's cracked voice pierced through the din.

"I will testify," she said rocking back and forth, holding on to the back of the pew in front of her. "I will testify to the Lord's grace..."

"Amen."

"Hallelu."

"Tell us sister," said the Prophet. "Tell us what Jesus has done for you."

Her voice was ardent, and she swayed forward and

back in her reverie.

"I prayed to Him two months ago 'bout a pain in my joints, and the pain it done go away..."

"Glory to the Lord."

"Yes...it done go away, when I been rubbin' this drugstore stuff on it three days and that don't do no good..."

"Jesus..."

"But I just ask Jesus and He fix it..."

"Hmm, hmm."

"He fix it 'cause I believe in Him..."

"Thank you Jesus."

"'cause I prays to Him every day..."

"Amen."

"An' now I'se prayin' to Him for help agin..."

"You go on and tell Him Sister," said the Prophet. "He'll help you."

"That's right."

"He will!"

The Prophet continued his exhorting; the congregation pressed to have this afflicted member purged of her grief.

"It's my only gran'chile," she said rocking in oblivion, the words pouring out. "She done have the coughs for a long, long time now..."

"That's bad."

"Help her Jesus."

"She done coughin' and' coughin' an' nothin' make her stop..."

"Jesus will," the Prophet said. "He'll fix her ill-- He'll fix her. Everybody pray for our little sister's grandchild now," he said rushing back on the dias and fluttering his hands like a dragon fly's wings over his head. "Hallelujah! He'll help her."

From the back of the room a voice rose up. Jesus on the mainline Tell Him what you want, oh...

Jesus on the mainline Tell Him what you want, oh... The congregation picked it up: piano, drums, tambourines, hands, feet, and fans adding to the beat.

Jesus on the mainline Tell Him what you want, oh...

If you need a doctor Tell Him what you want, oh...

And Martha sank, sank into the swirling sounds that swept around her and her grief. For her--they were for her and Livia. All these people and the prophet: the

prophet--for her and... Jesus! Help... He'll help...must help...must...must...mus

She rushed down the street toward home, her high shoes impeding her desire to fly above the caked dirt. Despite her age, she felt full of the fire of youth. Oliva would be well now, she thought. 'Course she well now--'course.

"Why I bet when you go home tonight she'll be just fine," the Prophet had said as she had flattened out the four dollars and placed them in the "miracle envelope."

Then he had walked on down the aisle handing out more envelopes.

"Only fifty tonight," he had said. "When they're gone there won't be anymore. Make sure you get yours; if something happens to one of your loved ones because you didn't put at least three dollars in an envelope, you'll have nobody to blame but yourself. It's money for the Lord--money for the Lord. C'mon now. I'll cut it off as quickly as I started it. Here you are sister," he had said when he handed one to Martha. And she had made sure. She hadn't given just the lowest amount--she had made sure.

She saw it up ahead in the darkness: the house with the two broken front steps. As she approached the door and listened, she rejoiced in her heart: there was no coughing. For the first time in she couldn't remember when...no coughing!

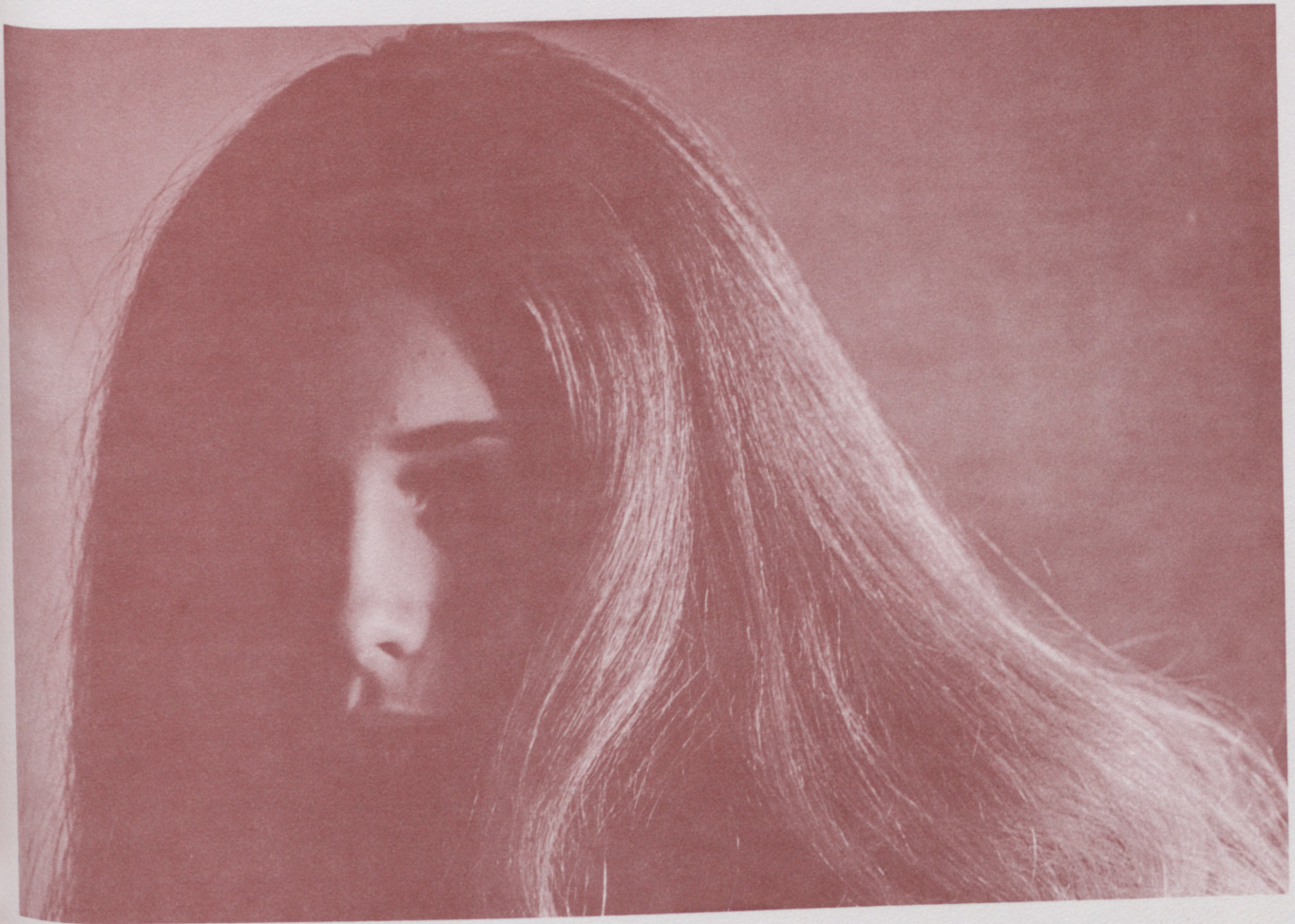
"Oh thank you Jesus," she said. "Thank you."

She threw open the torn screen door, pushed open the creaky wooden door, and stood still as death. Her ears pricked up like a dog's. There was no coughin. Only the rhythmic sound of Mary's weeping from Oliva's bedroom surrounded her like a tomb.





photo essay by kelly adams



Song of Triumph

How beautifully pure
(Of such kind as written here)
That rhymes not from line to line,
But within itself finds harmony--
A blending of the senses,
Of the words,
And of the mind;
As a porcelain mosaic,
Structured solely of white tile,
Save for one,
Alone and black,
But strategically placed;
As a lily on a thorn bush,
Or a man who has found peace.

MY NIGHT WAS OVER—LONG

Consciousness crept...
It seemed I was waiting,
Waiting in a vast stymied moment of misery.
Waiting--going not--waiting.

Life struggles toward death
Darkness greets the dawn
My night was over-long.

While waiting I dreamed...
Dreamed I was a man
Dreaming about a man
Dreaming about a lady.

Once I saw the "form"
Inspired by its own brilliance,
My heart grew heavy.

The man that I dreamed I was,
Was a dreamer, lost in his dream.
He had lost himself
And could not be saved,
But called not for help.
He had called before
Only to see the sugar image of help
Melt in the first spring rain.
He made me cry--or did I sing?
One can't be sure about dreams.

Though I heard the "word"
Crying of its truthfulness,
Static killed my joy.

The man in the dream
Of the man I dreamed I was,
Was a man without purpose
A man without cause.

He was a laughter that often cried,
He was an unwilling compromise
Undulating between freedom and a vacuum of despair.

In vain he groped,
In vain he strained,
In vain he suffered,
For the combination that refused to combine
That much I saw.

Or could I be wrong?
One can't be sure about dreams.

Which truth will I hear,
Confusion enters my soul,
Who will hear my prayer?

The lady in the dream
Of the man in the dream
Of the man I dreamed I was,
Was a singer,
Singing FREEDOM'S song,
A song of orgiastic HAPPINESS,
A song of naturized ONENESS,
A song of FREE AGENTNESS
In a world of FOLLOWSHIP and FIT-IN-NESS.

She was her song.

She loved her song

(That's all she loved)

Knowing not her self-induced love
Sang praises to nothing.

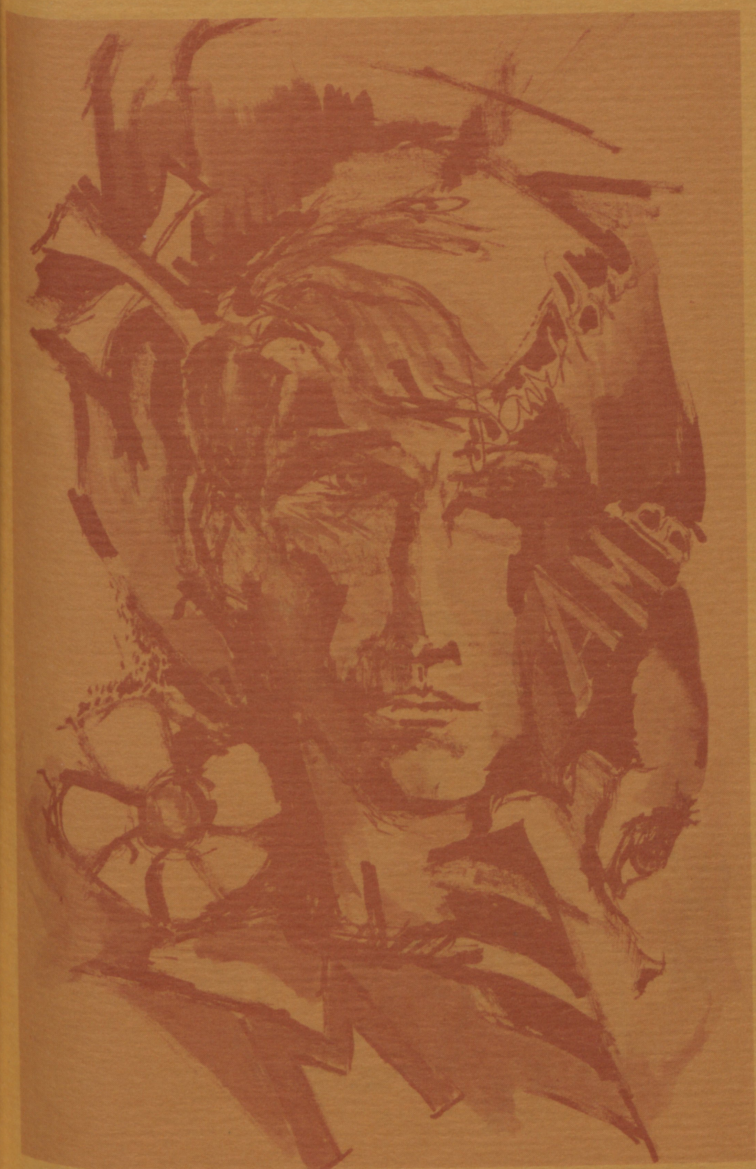
I almost believed her...

Or maybe I did,

One can't be sure about dreams.

A candle flickered-

Challenging the stifling darkness,
Giving for life, its death.



John R. Reynolds Editor
Sid Morris Art Director
Preston Pipkin Business Director

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