

City Lights Journal 3

Review

Carl Robb

1967

a review of

City Lights Journal Number Three. San Francisco, City Lights Books. \$2.50.

City Lights Bookstore is a bookstore, a publisher, and an institution. The Journal is a good indication of what can be found in the bookstore, from the publisher and the make up of the people the institution represents.

The Journal starts with the deadly satire "Macbird," by Barbara Garson. Since most people are familiar with the play I will ignore this with the small comment that if you haven't read the play yet, here is a good place to get it and much more besides.

The *Journal* is full of new writers and experimental works. Besides "Macbird" there is absolutely brilliant and amusing play called "The Shouting Head of Prophet John" by Bob Burleson. The play centers around a scene in the imprisonment of John the Baptist where Herod sends in a girl called Salome to tempt and seduce John. I have not heard of the play being performed, yet the setting would be quite easy to handle since it all takes place in a prison cell. The girl tempts John the Baptist with seductive motions and taunting remarks such as "You must enjoy life before you reform it, or else you won't know what ought to be changed."

Several other plays are present such as an unusual one titled "Frankenstein and the birth of the Monster" as told by Kenneth H. Brown and a very elaborate and grotesque play by Alexandra Joderowsky, "Sacramento Melodrama."

Poetry works include better—twice—read Ginsberg and "Apocalypse Rose" by Charles Plymell who occurrence by occurrence goes through life, plus poetry by others including Ferlinghetti.

Some works of India from a group called Hungry Generation is included in this Journal. "Stark Electric Jesus" by Malay Roy Choudhury is a short poem which was declared obscene in India. When the poem is read one notices the political criticism is more evident than any obscenity and just as elsewhere in the world this will bring an obscenity charge faster than anything else.

The Hungry Generation is the most desperate group of mankind as illustrated in the following quote: "Hunger describes a state of existence from which all unessentials have been stripped, leaving it receptive to everything around it. Hunger is a state of waiting with pain. To be Hungry is to be at the bottom of your personality,...To the Hungries, there is nothing except hunger for love, hunger for sympathy, hunger for a set of new healthy values, hunger for TRUTH."

Other works included in the *Journal* are an early 1900 literary debate on the homosexuality of Whitman, an "Ode to the American Indian" which traces the genocide of the American Indian, and much more.

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