

a Spaniard brought up in the Church could have made. It has moments of pain almost impossible to endure, and in its anxiety to make a point will load a sequence with double and triple meanings—Freudian, religious, private—that turn this story of a novice assailed by every possible ordeal and temptation into a cry of torment that rises impartially from every participant in the struggle. Bunuel could never attack religion as fiercely were he not so knowledgeable about it, with a deeply held respect for its power; the burning crown of thorns, the crucifix that turns into a flick-knife, the parody of the Last Supper are no more shocking in this film than the suicide, the rape, the hopelessness, the violence. Catholics will feel appalled at the vindictiveness, but realize at the same time that it cannot be dismissed as mere clumsy desecration. Bunuel shows us these things because he really considers this a way in which to diagnose the malady of humanity. *Viridiana* is terrible, but it would be a grave error simply to see it, as did a recent correspondent in *The Observer*, as a 'stupid and blasphemous insult' to the Christian faith: it is at once much more and much less. We may deplore it, but we can learn a great deal from it.

Reflections on a Canonization

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There took place in May the canonization of Martin de Porres, the mulatto, seventeenth-century, Dominican laybrother of Lima. We do not know for certain whether he was, by his coloured mother, of African or of Indian blood; the fact that he was usually called a mulatto, not a mestizo, rather suggests the former, and one may think there is something African about his laughter and gentleness. We do not even know for certain whether he was, technically, a laybrother, or simply a *familiaris* in the priory; he certainly took vows, but he seems always to have been referred to as a *donatus*, and the legislation of the Order at the time (for instance at the Chapters of 1580, 1642, and 1647) seems officially to have excluded half-castes from receiving the habit. But these details are of little significance by comparison with what he

was in himself. The important thing is that he belonged to the class of the despised and the underprivileged. He was illegitimate, brought up in poverty, a coloured man; he spent his life doing chores. But he overcame all this by the sheer breadth of his charity. The Acts of the General Chapter of 1642, three years after his death set it on record that at his death 'clergy and people came in great crowds, and kissed his feet and hands with tender devotion'. We know that he died at the moment that the words of the Creed were being sung: *Et homo factus est*, He became man. That is perhaps the great significance for our time of his long-awaited canonization. He had penetrated to the ultimate humanity of men, past the barriers of pride and cruelty, of oppression and resentment.

In his *Congo Journal* Graham Greene has noted: 'The laughter of the African: where in Europe does one hear so much laughter as among these leper workers? But the reverse is true: the deep sense of despair one feels in them when they are sick or in pain'. The pain of the emergent African world today is terribly real. No doubt it is too facile to lay it at the door simply of the colonializing west. Mr Greene has another entry: 'The masochism of Europe—many nuns received letters from Europe on learning of the events in Leopoldville (in 1959)—"We have brought it on ourselves".—No realization of the work selflessly done for the Africans'. It is the pain of a world that has lain too long in the darkness of paganism, to which the light of Christ has not yet appeared.

The African world is in this, curiously, the projected image of our own industrialized world. The pain of the immense majority of men working in factories, living in the obscure tedium of our modern cities, is today terribly real, even when it is in some sense unfelt, like the burnt-out cases amongst the lepers. Here too it is too facile to lay the blame at the door of the capitalists and share-holders, as if there had not been an immense amount of social reform, selflessly carried out by men and women as much of the 'establishment' as of other classes. But it is the pain of a world that has lost the illumination of Christ, and that too often torments itself with the will-o'-the-wisp of happiness sought in material gain. The tragedy of the working class movement of the last hundred years is that after it has succeeded, slowly and against a sheer weight of indifference and incomprehension, in wresting for itself basic economic and political rights, it has been so blind to the spiritual needs that are necessary also to a properly human existence—the need of education not simply in the three R's, nor in technologies, but in humanity. Certainly, we build schools and libraries and museums, but

none of this has kept pace with the vulgarities, the hopeless shallowness and narrow materialism of our civilization.

But if in both these worlds of darkness—the world of emergent nationalism and the world of triumphant socialism—one senses the deep despair of pain, there is also an extraordinary patience, a patience that too often goes unnoticed since it is only violence and conflict that attract attention or reach the headlines. It is the patience, largely fatalistic but not entirely so, of the really indigent, their basic human endurance in face of injustice and repression. One cannot but stand amazed, sometimes, at the record of the patience of working men and women in the really dark days of, for example, the Combination Acts; at the patience of the African today in South Africa or simply at the patience of people in great cities waiting in queues. It is this patience which can be taken by the grace of God, and turned into holiness; the quality of the little people who are, by a kind of right of inheritance, the material of Christ's mystical Body: 'See your vocation, brethren, that there are not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble. But the foolish things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the wise; and the weak things of the world hath God chosen, that he may confound the strong. And the base things of the world and the things that are contemptible, hath God chosen: and things that are not, that he might bring to naught things that are: that no flesh should glory in his sight'. (I Cor. I. 26-29).

If Martin has a meaning for the men and women of our day it is as one of the noble personifications of this patience. That is perhaps why the extraordinary spread in the last two decades of his *cultus* has not been among the well-off, nor the sophisticated, but among the little people, as if they recognized in him their own quality.

Not that patience, once transformed by grace, is mere resignation or fatalistic acceptance of irremediable woe. The patience so frequently spoken of in the New Testament is something quite different: 'The trying of your faith worketh patience, and patience hath a perfect work', as St James puts it; or more explicitly (according to Romans, v. 3), 'We glory also in tribulations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience trial, and trial hope; and hope confoundeth not, because the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost who is given to us'. The witness of those who knew Martin and testified to his life reads almost like a commentary on this fundamental Scriptural idea. 'He spent his whole life serving the sick. All he did was for the love of God, and in all things he found God. There was nothing

imaginable to which his charity could not extend itself, and which his affection would not undertake. All day and all night long he practised charity, bleeding and doctoring the sick, giving alms to Spaniards, Indians, Negroes'. He was 'barber, surgeon, custodian of the clothes, and infirmarian. Each of these duties was enough for any one person, but he alone filled all of them with great liberality, promptness and carefulness, without being weighed down by any one of them. It was a cause of wonder, which made me realize that, in as much as he clung to God in his soul, all these things were effects of divine grace'. 'While he would be performing the aforesaid duties, the Spirit would call him, and the servant of God would go to a room, close the door, and kneel down in a corner where he remained in prayer as if his previous work were merely a preparation for it'.

Martin, raised now to the altars of Church, is a reminder to us of the patience and charity that are needed to heal the world of its pain, and give it hope. 'To the sick, he seemed to be a spirit, or just hands or help from God'.

Christian Action in World Crisis

THOMAS MERTON

A death struggle can also be a struggle for life, a new birth. Perhaps the present crisis is the birth agony of a new world. Let us hope that it is. No one can dare to predict what is about to be born of our confusion, our frenzy, our apocalyptic madness. Certainly the old order is changing, but we do not know what is to come. All we know is that we see the many-crowned and many-headed monsters rising on all sides out of the deep, from the ocean of our own hidden and collective self. We do not understand them, and we cannot. We panic at the very sight of their iridescent scales, their jaws that flame with nuclear fire. But they pursue us relentlessly, even into absurd little caves fitted out with battery radios and hand-operated blowers. We find no security even in the spiritual cave of forgetfulness, the anaesthesia of the human