

VIRIDIANA "Education of a Nun"
(A REVIEW)

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BELL



Louis Bunuel's VIRIDIANA concerns the changes brought about in a young girl when she is suddenly in contact with sexual and social problems which have not previously been her concern.

Her tutors in this experience are her uncle, by whose instrumentation she finds herself outside the convent walls; his son, to whose point of view he is finally won; and the riff-raff of the local village whom Viridiana decides to espouse under the guise of Christian welfare.

But for anyone who was present at the second offering of the Dalhousie Film Society, it was evident that the director enjoyed watching young girls jump rope as much as did the uncle, Don Jaimie. His jump-rope technique is illustrated very clearly in his almost superfluous use of symbols. The wedding dress of the estate recalls the novice's white habit in the convent. Viridiana's inability to milk the cow is remembered when Don Jaimie is unable to ravish Viridiana after he has drugged her especially for that purpose.

Some symbols remain enigmatic such as the black bull in the little girl's dream. Others are overworked: the jump-rope which is used variously for jumping, for hanging Don Jaimie, and for holding up the pants of the beggar who eventually rapes Viridiana.

Viridiana is also preoccupied with symbols. She carries around the symbols of Christ's passion in her satchel. Replete with a crown of thorns, a wooden cross (phallically symbolic in the way she fondles it?), and even a little hammer and nails, this kit obviously provides her with the basis for "instant" meditation.

It is interesting to note that these were not used for purposes of mortification; in fact, only the little girl managed to get pricked by the thorns just before burning them.

It might have been better for Viridiana had she remembered Christ's gospel rather than only his death: "You have the poor among you always." (Mt. 26:11)

The beggars were quite aware of this statement and their actions take on a different aspect in the light of it. Viridiana and not the beggars did not want to have "rules". A short reflection on her pride might have saved her from her eventual disillusionment with her "mission". Her impudence in espousing 'the poor of the earth' is only too well reflected in Jorge's ransoming of the little dog.

Viridiana is a film which in no way tries to be socially critical. It opens in the closed society of a convent-school and ends in the manor of Don Jaimie's estate where most of the action takes place. The only indictment of civil order as such is seen in the appearance of the two eunuch-like guards who present themselves from time to time with capes and "pop-guns", and shiny black hats.

The movie itself could very well have been shot in any country. At one place we have to be told that Don Jaimie's fields are neglected. Later in the picture there are scenes of outdoor work: the fields are being cleared and surveyed. Jorge intends to plant wheat.

Bunuel's "blasphemy" is not so evident as his lack of a moral standpoint. We cannot condemn the beggars because they are only being realistic about the whole matter. Don Jaimie is most sympathetically portrayed, but we cannot either condone or criticize his actions.

Jorge generally succeeds in accomplishing what his father could not, but this is only because he is doing what is natural. Viridiana is the only one who changes. And because we are watching the process of this change there is no basis to decide whether it is meaningful or not.

**OFF THE
C.U.P.
...WITH L.C.C.**

FRENCH EXTREMISM

The 1964 Royal Visit to Canada will be historically recorded as marking the extent to which French Canadian students have left the mainstream of Canadian thought and actions.

Instead of joining in mature welcome of their sovereign, students at Laval University in particular attempted "peaceful demonstrations" against the royal visit and staged a "Satire on the Symbolism of the Crown" before some 1,000 fellow students in a campus auditorium. For their "extremist" actions they were rewarded by the equally extreme actions of the Quebec provincial and city police.

"Laval students, reinforced by students from the Universities of Montreal and Sherbrooke, were harassed, bullied, and beaten by riot squads," a Canadian University Press dispatch from Quebec reported.

"Two students were arrested in a Laval Chapel washroom during a 1,000 strong student demonstration Sunday as the Queen passed the Laval campus en route to the airport, James Laxer, the C.U.P. Vice-President said.

C.U.P. reported some 50 students were arrested in total over the weekend as the police indiscriminately accosted boys and girls, regardless of age. Laxer called the days "historic... a major moral victory... for the independence movement in Quebec" as the students by the bushel turned against the Lesage government and "were moved to shout independence slogans for the first time".

Laxer does not question the wisdom of the students demonstrating either "peacefully" or violently. He reported only what he thought he saw and as objectively as he could. But Laxer did offer the opinion that the weekend's activities had benefited the "Rassemblement pour l'Independance National" (RIN) led by Pierre Bourgault.

"Certainly its public popularity will be enhanced," Laxer wrote. The "Georgian", student newspaper at Sir George Williams University, Montreal, differed editorially:

"...those self-appointed saviours of Quebec, the separatists, have finally and irrefutably demonstrated just what their membership consists of: a pack of maladjusted and politically naive adolescents led, or rather mis-led, by a gutter elite of completely irresponsible pseudo-intellectuals, the whole heavily leavened with professional thugs of the worst sort".

The "GEORGIAN" went on to accuse them of making Canada and Quebec a "laughing stock in the eyes of the world" and inflicting greater harm on the expressed goal of the "continuing evolution of Quebec" than they tried to achieve by parading their "infantile xenophobia for the press of all the world to see".

"The true leaders of the new Quebec", the "GEORGIAN" said, worked quietly for the good of the province and welcomed the Queen.

"The claims of that despicable little clique to represent the political aspirations of over five million people would be merely laughable" but for the damage done by it, the newspaper said.

The armed services extensively protected the Queen and Prince Philip in Quebec City, to a greater degree than in Charlottetown and Ottawa.

That demonstrations remained "peaceful to the last", (according to C.U.P.) - severity of police action considered - is no credit to French Canadian students.

CUBA

A McMaster post graduate student in experimental psychology who was among 45 Canadian university students who toured Communist Cuba for two months, told McGill students the Cuban people still fly the Stars and Stripes along with Cuban and Russian flags because they are "not against the American people, but against imperialism".

Stanley Munoz, (BA-McGill), showed slides he had taken during his tour to support what he said. While showing a slide of contented Canadian cattle on a dirt road, Munoz commented on the good trade relations between Cuba and Canada.

Other slides showed Cuban laborers being driven home after a day at the beach, and other laborers enjoying a month's vacation with pay at a resort hotel.

Munoz made the trip by air via Mexico and travelled extensively over the island... within one and one half miles from Quantanomo, the American Naval base, he said.

His slide presentation at McGill was under the auspices of the Young Communist League. Munoz said he was "politically naive".

ASIDE - EMS

...McGill students are launching what they claim to be the world's largest blood drive - for five thousand pints... Fraternities across the nation are now rushing... Doing its share for students in Africa, South America, and Asia, students at the University of Toronto plan to send \$12,000 to Geneva through the World University Service amassed from three fund raising drives at which "beautiful belles" will be auctioned off as slaves, date lunches sold, and miles of coin collecting tape distributed... Queen's is investigating the "Problem of Student Government" aimed at negotiating a new agreement between the Alma Mater Society and Graduate Students' Society with the hope of evolving a new type of student government... Author Hugh MacLennan, native Cape Bretonner and associate professor of English at McGill, is giving weekly lectures on Canada at Queens... University of Waterloo's Lutheran College Freshmen are being denied the vote in council elections this year... The yearbook at the George Washington University in D.C. is called, what else but, "The Cherry Tree".