

debate, an argument, a *real encounter*, going. My attempt was adroitly deflected. Peace once more descended upon the auditorium.

We were all, it seemed, brothers and sisters who had never squabbled and would go forward in lock-step towards the shining dawn of interreligious cooperation. We were not, it appeared, to bring up the fact that the Christian God seems, to most Buddhists, like Santa Claus, or that most Christians see Buddhists as wimps who run away from suffering rather than transfiguring it by allowing themselves to be crucified. Nor were we to mention that Christians have killed each other over differing interpretations of central doctrines or that Buddhists have attacked and suppressed other Buddhists whom they have regarded as incapable of attaining liberation due to their 'perversions' of the Buddha's Word.

But, if we don't acknowledge our differences honestly, our dialogue will be trivial and vapid, it will not help us to move towards 'the transformation into the global consciousness of the Second Axial Period' to which Ewert Cousins calls us (p. 165), we will be lost in a mist of monastic monism. I have argued elsewhere that we see only limited progress in dialogue when the participants are Benedictines and Zen practitioners. Benedictines are (as Br David Steindl-Rast said on another occasion) very irenic people, not given to Dominican debate, and Zen practitioners are apt to answer a logical question with a poem or an artistic flourish of the writing brush. Where are Aquinas and Dignaga in all this? Perhaps they will be invited to the next Encounter.

Roger Corless

BONAZZI, Robert, *Man in the Mirror: John Howard Griffin and the Story of Black Like Me* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1997), pp. 208. ISBN 1-5707-5118-8 (paperback). \$14.00.

Book reviews, as a genre, depend entirely on context. They are composed and published because a certain venue, like *The Merton Annual*, thinks that its readers will be interested in the book reviewed. It is not surprising, for instance, that of the seven books reviewed in Volume 10 of *The Merton Annual*, four directly dealt with Merton. The other three books reside within a familiar Mertonian orbit: Michael Casey's books on prayer and *lectio divina* and Kathleen Norris's memoir, *A Cloister Walk*.

So, one might ask, why is this volume of *The Merton Annual* publishing a review of Robert Bonazzi's study of John Howard Griffin and his germinal book *Black Like Me*? Bonazzi's book certainly does not fall under category one, at least as it is defined by Volume 10 of *The Merton Annual*: books by and about Merton. Nor does it fall under category two: books dealing with the contemplative life in general.

One might suggest that a review of *Man in the Mirror* belongs in *The Merton Annual* because the book offers fascinating bits of information about the man who was chosen by the Merton Legacy trust to serve as the first official biographer of Merton and who later had the project taken from him (pp. 156, 167). Thus, those interested in the history of Merton biographies might gain some insight into the beginning of that industry.

One might also suggest that a review of *Man in the Mirror* belongs in *The Merton Annual* because the book offers fascinating bits of information about a man who served as Merton's tutor in photography. Indeed, it was a camera loaned by Griffin

that Merton took with him to Asia. Too, as Bonazzi tells us, Griffin processed the photographs shot by Merton that appeared in 'the beautiful visual collaboration entitled *A Hidden Wholeness*' (p. 158).

One might also suggest that a review of *Man in the Mirror* belongs in *The Merton Annual* because the book offers fascinating bits of information about the ways in which Merton affected people who knew him. Bonazzi tells us that Griffin 'was devastated' when he received news of Merton's death (p. 157). Griffin felt, apparently, that Merton was one of the people who gave him the strength to continue to write, to work, amidst the chaos of the 1960s (p. 157).

I would want to emphasize, however, that a review of *Man in the Mirror* belongs in *The Merton Annual* mainly because the book obliquely reminds us that Merton was more than just a contemplative whose orbit includes books like Casey's and Norris's. Merton, indeed, was a contemplative Catholic radical whose work resonated with that of people like John Howard Griffin.

As many readers know, *Black Like Me* is the story of Griffin's travels through pre-1963 southern America. Disguised as a 'Negro', Griffin offers an extraordinary tale: it is the vision of a man dedicated to unmasking racism. Bonazzi's *Man in the Mirror* reveals the story behind the story, illuminating the life and work of an important Catholic intellectual, activist, artist. It also makes an oblique connection to Merton's own contemplative radical Catholicism.

Consider that Griffin is quoted by Bonazzi as claiming that in reference to 'a religious man with no sense of justice', 'Thomas Merton says that such men do not imitate Christ, they merely parody Christ' (p. 154).

Consider that as he began work on the biography of Merton, Griffin lived in Merton's hermitage off and on for three years. It is not surprising that during this time, Griffin continued to support the civil rights movement, even championing 'Black Power', all the while finding the 'deepest solitude he had known' (p. 160). Merton, after all, was no stranger either to solitude or to support for the civil rights movement, as much of his work from the 1960s shows.

Consider, finally, that Griffin writes this about his persona in *Black Like Me*: 'I could have been a Jew in Germany, a Mexican in a number of states, or a member of any "inferior" group...only the details would have differed' (p. 171). This sentiment is exactly that which underlies Merton's extraordinary poem, *The Geography of Lograire*. As I have argued elsewhere,<sup>5</sup> *The Geography of Lograire* is a poem of personae. In it Merton takes on the guise of oppressed people throughout the world. While Merton did not physically become the Other, as did Griffin, Merton imaginatively wanders in the shoes of the Other.

*Man in the Mirror*, then, helps us to place Merton in the larger cultural context in which he deserves to be placed. Merton was not simply a Trappist. He was that, indeed, but he was also a man of the world, a man who traveled in circles where contemplation melds with social action, where prayer directs one not simply to God but to the suffering Other.

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5. *Religious Dialectics of Pain and Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994).