

determined, although not without internal dissension about means, to break the seal on this strange land.

Happily, the superior of the Jesuit missions in the Far East, Alessandro Valignano, had realized that 'the only possible way to penetration will be utterly different from that which has been adopted up to now in all the other missions in these countries'. The next hundred years were witness to the glorious success of his 'way of penetration'. This was not to be at the back of an imperial army nor with bell, book, and candle, and stentorian calls to repentance, but by a tactful and persuasive contact with 'a people both intelligent and learned'. This phrase is taken from the last letter from Peking of Matteo Ricci, S.J., the greatest of the 'generation of giants' which is the subject of Father Dunne's excellent book.

In 1582 Ricci landed at Macao. Between then and his death in 1610 his achievement had been remarkable. With immense pains he had become proficient in Chinese, language and learning, had done much to overcome the Chinese antipathy to foreigners, but most importantly had weaned himself from the thoughtless Europeanism that was and is a constant temptation to missionaries, and which was eventually to undo so much of his work.

Perhaps it comes to this. The Chinese were not, in Ricci's mind, a set of benighted pagans who had to be saved in spite of themselves. Like so many peoples more primitive than they, their world was 'an ordered universe in which the object of man's striving is the maintenance of harmonious relations with nature, with himself, and with his fellowmen'. Ricci was prepared to meet them on this ground, with the result that at his death the Jesuits were accepted throughout China as men of wisdom and cultivation, and their converts, although not baptized by the thousand, were of a very high quality.

Father Dunne writes learnedly of his confrères, of Ricci and Trigault, Vagnoni and Schall, and he writes with a humour which fails him only once, when he solemnly lists with full style and title twenty-two 'noted scholars and scholar-officials' with whom Ricci 'stood on terms of intimate friendship.' There is then just a trace of tuft-hunting in this book, as indeed there is in the 'way of penetration' which it records and defends. But how venial a fault this was when compared with the hasty and insular enthusiasm of those, Dominicans among them, who having come late to China went crying to Rome with their ignorant denunciations of Chinese idolatry and Jesuit connivance.

After three centuries the Holy See righted the balance, but the damage was already done.

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THE INTELLECTUAL HERO. Studies in the French Novel, 1880-1955, by Victor Brombert; Faber; 25s.

This book is an interesting account of how the word 'hero' grew inverted commas. Strangely enough, the point of application of the research is the field

of the French novel over the last three quarters of a century; strangely, because although most English Francophiles are quite prepared to view their own countrymen as a conglomeration of saloon bar hearties lambasting the least manifestation of the nascent intellect, it is a bit disquieting for them to be faced with the fact that anti-intellectualism, endemic in England at least since the inception of muscular Christianity, has a ripe tradition across the Channel—and where it is least expected, in the art of literature.

Mr Brombert's theme is the presence of the intellectual as chief protagonist in a great variety of fictive narratives, some important, some very second-rate, from those names forgotten in France as well as here (Jules Vallès' *Jacques Vingtras*, Bourget's *Le Disciple*, and the elucubrations of Maurice Barrès) to Louis Guilloux, Sartre, Malraux and Camus. It is no accident that the period of the Dreyfus affair saw the beginning of this portrayal, since it was then that the word 'intellectual' was first used (substantivally) as a term of opprobrium, applied by the solid clericomilitary phalanxes of the French Right to those writers who defended Dreyfus. (The behaviour of churchmen in France at that time is still, in retrospect, capable of making most reasonable Catholics wince). The social and racial hatreds seething under the surface of French life seemed to find a perfect outlet in the detestation of the intellectuals, 'the enemies of the French soul' in the terms of one hysterical outburst.

But it is not only from this quarter that the criticism of the insidious, pretentious professor comes. The chief interest of Mr Brombert's book is that in it we see those whom we, in this country, have come to regard as the representatives of ideas in literature, turn on their own kind and rend them, in the shape of Louis Guilloux's provincial professor in *Le Sang noir* who is not only a laughing-stock because of what he teaches, but because of what he appears to be, an almost comically deformed grotesque, shabby and myopic; and the bitter accusations of Roger Martin du Gard in *Jean Barois*, illustrating the classic pattern of loss of religious faith through too much exercise of the mind.

It is distressing but probably salutary to be reminded that France's intellectual big guns have spent so much of their time distrusting themselves and each other; that they are in fact as well as fiction addicted to a pejorative myth of the intellectual. Because it is a myth, and a dangerous one: what is under attack is not the pathetic don *en pantoufles* (or Mr Amis's English version, the scheming, malicious ignoramus)—it is fundamentally the action of the reflective intellect in human affairs, supposedly corrosive in religion, rigidly and oppressively doctrinaire in politics (the type figure here being Evariste Gamelin in Anatole France's *Les Dieux ont soif*), a solvent of the will to action (Malraux's 'thought is a monstrous fraud'). The intellectual's view of himself—at least in the tradition analysed by Mr Brombert—seems to be that he begins by wanting to be Faust and always ends up by admitting that he is Hamlet.

LOUIS ALLEN